

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

The US has the presidency in December. The programme of work largely focuses on regular briefings and mandate renewals.

Two African regions feature on the programme of work. There will be a briefing on inter-communal violence and terrorism in West Africa by Special Representative and head of the [UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel \(UNOWAS\)](#) Mohammed Ibn Chambas. The UNOWAS mandate is also expected to be renewed for an additional three years before the end of the month, through an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the president of the Security Council. The Council is also expected to focus on Central Africa, with a briefing and consultations scheduled on the semi-annual report on the [UN Office for Central Africa](#) and the implementation of the UN regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army.

Other African issues include:

- [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), renewal of MONUSCO's mandate;
- [Somalia](#), renewal of counter-piracy measures;
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the activities of UNMISS, as well as a briefing by the chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee; and
- [Sudan](#), the quarterly briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee and semi-annual briefing on the ICC's work by the Prosecutor.

Regarding [Syria](#), there will be the regular briefings on the political and humanitarian situation

and on chemical weapons. In addition, Council members are expected to vote on a draft resolution renewing the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access, which expires on 10 January 2020.

Other Middle East issues include:

- [Golan Heights](#), renewal of UNDOF's mandate and consultations;
- [Iraq](#), briefing and consultations on UNAMI and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property;
- [Israel/Palestine](#), monthly briefing and consultations;
- [Iran](#), briefings on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, from the Council's 2231 facilitator, the Secretariat, and the EU; and
- [Yemen](#), the monthly briefing, followed by consultations, on implementation of resolutions 2451 and 2452.

Regarding Asian issues, the quarterly meeting on [Afghanistan](#) is expected. A meeting on the human rights situation in the [DPRK](#) is also possible.

The only debate scheduled for December is the semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal [Tribunals](#).

There will also be the annual briefing by outgoing subsidiary body chairs, reviewing their experience and developments during their term as chairs of committees or working groups.

## In Hindsight: Negotiations on Resolution 2493 on Women, Peace and Security

On 29 October, during the Security Council's annual open debate on women, peace and security, resolution 2493 was adopted, following long and difficult negotiations led by South Africa (S/PV.8649). The resolution passed unanimously,

and Naledi Pandor, South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, who chaired part of the debate, remarked that she had been told that this was "a welcome return to consensus in the Council".

27 November 2019  
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## In Hindsight: Negotiations on Resolution 2493 on Women, Peace and Security

Attaining this consensus was not easy. In the lead-up to the debate, South Africa needed to make several concessions to obtain a text acceptable to all, leaving some Council members feeling, as the UK put it after the adoption, “disappointed that the Council did not seize the opportunity to draft a resolution that was more ambitious in scope”. Nor were things always smooth procedurally, with some changes not communicated on time, including when the text was put in blue on the Friday before Tuesday’s debate. At times, it seemed that civil society and some member states following the negotiations closely would have preferred having no resolution, rather than one that risked walking back the agenda.

South Africa circulated the first draft of the resolution to all Council members on 9 September, ahead of the busy high-level week in the UN General Assembly. The first of three face-to-face negotiation meetings was held on 17 September, with the bulk of negotiations conducted over e-mail.

South Africa intended the resolution to focus on the “full implementation” of the women, peace and security agenda. Women’s sexual and reproductive health rights—never explicitly mentioned in any of the drafts—played a role in the initial US position that they could not support the “full” implementation of the agenda. After the resolution was adopted, the US representative stated that the US “cannot accept references to sexual and reproductive health”. It seems that the US argued that its national position on sexual and reproductive health meant that it could not support the implementation of the entirety of the agenda, as that would include resolutions of the Council containing such references. Apparently, the US had argued for replacing “full” with “effective” implementation. In the end, the formulation “full” implementation was retained.

Other members used their statements after the vote to emphasize opposing views. The UK said, “we endorse its confirmation of the Council’s call for full — and I stress the word “full” — implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) [...] The emphasis on full implementation — and again, I stress “full” — is vital”, adding that “an effective response to conflict-related sexual violence [...] needs

to include sexual and reproductive health services.” France, in its statement after the vote, called it “regrettable that the Security Council continues to be silent on the crucial issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights” and welcomed “the fact that resolution 2493 calls for the full implementation of all resolutions on this agenda, which are mutually reinforcing and to which France is committed in all their aspects.”

The role and protection of women human rights defenders also proved controversial during negotiations. It seems that a majority of Council members threatened to abstain in the vote should draft language related to “women human rights defenders” be deleted. These members were apparently willing to accept the indirect reference that appears in the final formulation, however, crafted after strong resistance from China and Russia to the original explicit language. Paragraph 6 of the resolution now “encourages Member States to create safe and enabling environments for civil society, including formal and informal community women leaders, women peacebuilders, political actors, and those who protect and promote human rights, to carry out their work independently and without undue interference, including in situations of armed conflict, and to address threats, harassment, violence and hate speech against them”. Russia, in its statement, said, “we feel obliged to point out that the resolution contains a number of provisions that go beyond the Security Council’s mandate. It is overloaded with issues relating to the protection and promotion of human rights, which the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council already deal with successfully and effectively. We urge the Security Council to adhere strictly to its mandate, and we do not support attempts to justify its interference in matters that are part of the remit of other organs.” The UK, on the other hand, deplored the lack of an explicit mention of women human rights defenders, which was echoed by France. China made its negotiating position clear in its statement during the open debate, saying that: “Non-governmental organisations are expected to play a constructive role by observing the laws of the countries concerned, respecting the ownership

of the host Government and fully consulting with them.” China went on to say that it “therefore reserves its position vis-à-vis paragraph 6 of resolution 2493 (2019), which we have just adopted.”

The resolution takes note of the work of the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on women, peace and security. The initial draft had called on the chairs of the IEG to submit an annual update on progress towards implementing its recommendations, a recommendation made in the Secretary-General’s latest report on women, peace and security. This was cut, however. China stressed that “the Group is not an official body of the Council” and that “the work it does in the name of the Council must respect the views of all Council members in a manner consistent with the Security Council mandate and the rules of procedure, or its decisions will not be authoritative or morally binding.” Russia declared that it was “compelled to conclude that that Group has not fully succeeded in becoming a coordinating link in the chain of the work in this area.” Among other aspects, Russia criticised the IEG for being “unable to avoid a certain degree of politicization in its work”.

As with last April’s resolution on sexual violence in conflict, which met with abstentions from China and Russia, some Council members and civil society representatives questioned the wisdom of pursuing any resolution on women, peace and security in the current political environment, whose dynamics have not changed significantly since April. Some observers also queried the value of an outcome that would not add much that was new to the agenda. South Africa, however, felt that it was important to reiterate key points of the agenda ahead of the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325 next year. In the end, the resolution made some headway in the areas of women’s participation in all stages of peace processes, and although the explicit language on women human rights defenders was omitted, there is recognition of the need for a safer environment for them and for civil society to do their work. The task ahead remains the full implementation of this and past resolutions on women, peace and security.

## Status Update since our November Forecast

### Guinea-Bissau

On 4 November, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2019/13) expressing full support for the communiqués issued by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the AU following President José Mário Vaz's dismissal of the government of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes on 28 October, less than one month before the presidential election. The presidential statement further called on "President Vaz and the government led by Prime Minister Gomes in charge of conducting the electoral process to resolve their differences in the spirit of respect and cooperation" and affirmed the "urgent need to hold the presidential elections on 24 November 2019 as agreed". On 11 November, Council members were briefed in consultations on the evolving situation by Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) Rosine Sori-Coulilyaly. In press elements afterwards, Council members welcomed ECOWAS' recent decision to strengthen its mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), and to send a mission of heads of state and government to Bissau on 16 November 2019. Members recalled that the Council would consider taking appropriate measures against those who undermine stability in Guinea-Bissau.

### Women, Peace and Security

On 4 November, the Council resumed and concluded its annual open debate on women, peace and security, under the theme "Towards the successful implementation of the women, peace and security agenda: moving from commitments to accomplishments in preparation for the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)" (S/PV.8649 (Resumption 2)). The debate, which started on 29 October, had had to be suspended due to UN austerity measures.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 5 November, the Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/PV.8658). High Representative Valentin Inzko briefed on the latest report of the Office of the High Representative (S/2019/843). Selma Korjenić, Head of Programme-Bosnia and Herzegovina for the non-governmental

organisation TRIAL International also briefed, via video teleconference. The Council unanimously adopted resolution 2496 renewing the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) for another year.

### Libya

On 6 November, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda delivered her semi-annual briefing to the Council on recent developments concerning cases in Libya (S/PV.8660). On 18 November, Council members met for a briefing, followed by consultations, on the work of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and Libya sanctions. The briefers were Special Representative and head of UNSMIL Ghassan Salamé (via video teleconference) and the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Jürgen Schulz, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany. Rida Al Tubuly, director and co-founder of Together We Build It, briefed Council members as a representative of Libyan civil society (S/PV.8667).

### The Finnish Workshop

On 7 and 8 November, the 15 current Council members and the incoming five (Estonia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, and Vietnam) participated in the 17th annual "Hitting the Ground Running" workshop organised by Finland, held at the Greentree Foundation, a conference centre near New York City. Former head of UN Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guéhenno was the keynote speaker during the opening dinner.

### Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations

On 11 November, the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, which is chaired by Côte d'Ivoire, held a meeting focused on "transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding presence through the example of UNAMID".

### Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG)

On 12 November, the IWG held a meeting to discuss, among other things, a chair's paper on the Council's transparency and efficiency.

### Arria-formula Meeting on the Challenges of Radicalisation in Prisons

On 12 November, Council members held an open Arria-formula meeting focused on how to address the risk of terrorist radicalisation in prison and promote the rehabilitation of prisoners and their reintegration into society. The meeting was co-hosted by Belgium and Indonesia, with the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and co-sponsored by the chairs of the Group of Friends of Preventing Violent Extremism (Jordan and Norway). Opening remarks were delivered by Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverwe (Belgium); Sri Puguh Budi Utami, Indonesia's Deputy Minister for Corrections in the Ministry of Law and Human Rights; and Simone Monashebian, Director of UNODC. Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) moderated the session, which included briefings by the following panellists: David Scharia, Director, Chief of Branch of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED); Thomas Renard, Senior Research Fellow at the Egmont Institute in Belgium; and Agnès Coutou, ICRC Protection Adviser. After the panellists' presentations, Norway made a statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Preventing Violent Extremism, followed by Council members and other member states.

### Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 13 November, the Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany), provided the Council with the 90-day briefing about the committee's work, in consultations. At the media stakeout that followed, France, Germany and the UK made a joint statement in which they expressed concern over the recent ballistic missile launches by the DPRK and emphasised that these actions by the DPRK constitute a violation of Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, they called on the DPRK to engage in meaningful talks with the US and take steps towards verifiable denuclearisation.

### Sudan/South Sudan

On 14 November, the Council adopted resolution 2497 renewing the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until 15 May 2020 (S/PV.8663). The resolution maintains the authorised troop ceiling at 3,550 and the police ceiling at 640. The resolution also extends the mission's support

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## Status Update since our November Forecast

for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), established in 2011 to conduct monitoring and verification activities along the Sudan-South Sudan border, until 15 May 2020.

### Children and Armed Conflict:

On 15 November, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict met for a video teleconference with the country task force for monitoring and reporting in the Philippines. On 26 November, Belgium, Peru, Poland and the UK co-hosted an Arrria-formula meeting on reintegration. The meeting focused on how to better support children once they are separated from armed forces and armed groups and how to bridge the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for more sustainable reintegration. Another area that was highlighted was incorporating children's views into reintegration strategies.

### Open debate on the role of reconciliation in the maintenance of international peace and security

On 19 November the Council held an open debate to discuss reconciliation (S/PV.8668). Secretary-General António Guterres; Alpaslan Özerdem, Dean of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University; and Ilwad Elman, Director of Programs and Development, Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre, briefed. Lord Ahmad, the UK Minister of State for the Commonwealth, the United Nations and South Asia, presided. Member states discussed their own experiences with reconciliation mechanisms, such as truth and reconciliation commissions. There was also an emphasis on the need to adapt to increasingly complex situations and ensure inclusivity at every stage. The Secretary-General

stated: "successful reconciliation is both an aim and a process".

### Israel/Palestine

On 20 November, the Council held a briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.8669). Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, briefed. Tania Hary, Executive Director of the Gisha Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement, also briefed. Members then held consultations. Just prior to the meeting, Ambassador Karen Pierce, Permanent Representative of the UK, made a statement to journalists on behalf of the EU members of the Security Council (Belgium, France, Germany, Poland and the UK) in which she reiterated their common position on Israeli settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territories, stressing that all settlement activity is illegal under international law.

### The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S)

On 20 November, the Council held a briefing on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S), a force which Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (G5 Sahel) established in 2017 to combat terrorist and criminal groups (S/PV.8670). Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita presented the Secretary-General's 11 November report on the FC-G5S (S/2019/868). Also briefing were: Alpha Barry, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Burkina Faso, on behalf of the G5 Sahel presidency; Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed of the AU Permanent Observer mission to the UN; Koen Vervaeke (via VTC), Managing Director for Africa in the European External Action Service; and, via video

teleconference, civil society representative Assitan Diallo, President of the Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche et le Développement (AFARD). Members then held consultations, requested by the A3. The A3 and G5 Sahel countries delivered joint remarks to the press after the meeting, noting with concern delays in the implementation of donor countries' commitments to the force. On 21 November, Council members issued a press statement, encouraging the G5 Sahel States to ensure that the FC-G5S "continues to scale up its level of operation over time in order to demonstrate increased tangible operational results" (SC/14029).

### Cyprus

On 21 November, the Council held consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed Council members on the recent developments and latest Secretary-General's report on his good offices (S/2019/883). During the meeting, Council members expressed their support for the political process and the upcoming (on 25 November) trilateral meeting between the Secretary-General and Cypriot leaders.

### Lebanon

On 25 November, the Council held consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701. Ján Kubiš, Special Coordinator for Lebanon, and Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific briefed Council members on the latest developments in Lebanon and the most recent Secretary-General's report (S/2019/889).

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## Iraq

### Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is expected to receive a briefing by the Special

Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Henniss-Plasschaert, on the most recent developments

in the situation in Iraq and on the two latest Secretary-General's reports—on UNAMI and on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2490](#) (20 September 2019) extended the mandate of UNITAD until 21 September 2020. [S/RES/2470](#) (21 May 2019) extended the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2020. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8675](#) (26 November) was a briefing on UNITAD. [S/PV.8624](#) (20 September 2019) was the adoption of resolution 2490, extending the mandate of UNITAD until 21 September 2020. [S/PV.8531](#) (21 May 2019) was the adoption of resolution 2470, extending the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2020. [Secretary General's Reports S/2019/903](#) (22 November 2019) was on UNAMI. [S/2019/865](#) (7 November 2019) was the Secretary-General's 24th report on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. [Security Council Letter S/2019/878](#) (13 November 2019) was from the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, transmitting the third report on the activities of UNITAD. [Sanctions Committee Document SC/14005](#) (30 October 2019) was a press release on the removal of two entities from the sanctions list.

third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

UNAMI's mandate expires on 31 May 2020. The mandate of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) expires on 21 September 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

Widespread popular protests in different parts of Iraq, including in Baghdad, started in early October and have since continued with varying intensity. Protesters are voicing long-standing demands regarding basic services and infrastructure, lacking as a result of government neglect and failure to reconstruct the country, as well as overall corruption. Protests with similar demands have occurred sporadically over the past years. This time, protesters also seek structural change in the country, including amendments to the constitution and the electoral system. In his latest report on UNAMI, the Secretary-General calls the demonstrations and related violence “stark reminders” that “the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people for a better future remain unfulfilled.”

In relation to the demonstrations, the Secretary-General emphasizes that “the only way forward towards a better future is through peaceful and inclusive dialogue resulting in concrete outcomes that meet the aspirations of all Iraqis”. After consulting with Iraqi authorities and the demonstrators, Hennis-Plasschaert, in a 11 November press release, proposed a “Next Step” plan including different principles and measures to end the violence. Principles include the constitutionally-guaranteed right to demonstration and peaceful assembly as well as the freedom of expression, and no use of live ammunition and no “improper use of non-lethal devices (such as tear gas canisters)”. The plan further details immediate, short-term and medium-term measures. Immediate measures include the release of protesters who had demonstrated peacefully since 1 October, the prosecution of perpetrators of excessive violence and those targeting demonstrators, as well as a public call on international parties and parties from the region to respect Iraq's sovereignty. Short-term measures include electoral and security sector reform, as well as tackling corruption. The medium-term measures—with a proposed implementation timeframe

of one to three months—address issues such as amending the constitution and the submission of corruption cases to the courts.

On 8 November, a spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed grave concern over reports of deaths and injuries resulting from the use of force by security forces against demonstrators, as well as deliberate killings by armed elements in Iraq. Between 1 October and 7 November, UNAMI's Human Rights Office documented 269 deaths in the context of demonstrations turned violent across the country with at least 8,000 others reportedly injured, the spokesperson said. The majority of the casualties have resulted from the use of live ammunition by security forces and armed elements, described by many as private militia groups, as well as the unnecessary, disproportionate or improper use of less-lethal weapons such as tear gas, he said. UNAMI's Human Rights Office published a special report on 22 October, which covered protests that had taken place from 1 to 9 October. Its preliminary findings include reports of excessive use of force against demonstrators and “deliberate killings of unarmed protesters” constituting violations of the right to life. The report further found an extensive use of repressive measures against media coverage of the protests, such as “arbitrary arrests, threats and harassment, confiscation of equipment, deletion of footage, attacks against media outlets as well as blanket restrictions on the dissemination of information through shutting down internet and blocking social media.”

On 6 November, the Secretary-General's spokesperson issued a statement on the demonstrations in Iraq, expressing the Secretary-General's “serious concern over the rising number of deaths and injuries”. The Secretary-General further described as “disturbing” the reported “continued use of live ammunition” against the demonstrators.

UNAMI published a second special report on 5 November, which covered protests that took place from 25 October to 4 November. Its preliminary findings include continuing human rights violations and abuses. Among those are multiple arrests, abductions, efforts to hinder media coverage of the protests, “unnecessary, disproportionate and/or improper use of tear gas and stun grenades”, and the use of lethal force against protesters.

On 31 October, in response to the

demonstrations, Iraqi president Barham Salih announced Prime Minister Adil Abd Al-Mahdi's intention to resign if a successor were to be agreed upon. Al-Mahdi remains in power following an intervention by Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, according to media reports. On 18 November, The Intercept and the New York Times simultaneously published their joint findings from documents leaked to The Intercept by an anonymous source detailing Iranian influence in Iraq. The protesters have also started calling for an end to Iran's influence in the country.

Also on 31 October, ISIL confirmed the death of its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi near Barisha, Syria, during a raid conducted by US special forces. The latest report on UNAMI by the Secretary-General emphasizes that ISIL continues to conduct asymmetrical attacks in Iraq. In that context, UNAMI attributed to ISIL more than half of the 139 documented civilian casualties (49 dead and 60 injured, not including the protest-related casualties) between 5 August and 31 October.

On 11 October, a representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani delivered a sermon demanding that a credible investigation take place within two weeks into what he said was an excessive use of force against protesters, attributable to the Iraqi government. A High Investigative Committee formed by Prime Minister Al-Mahdi found, *inter alia*, that security forces lacked oversight and used excessive force, as well as finding that some demonstrators had used violence.

A package of 17 measures in response to the protests was decided upon by the Council of Ministers on 5 October. In his latest UNAMI report, the Secretary-General calls it a step in the right direction and emphasizes the importance of swift implementation.

UNAMI continued to observe trials and investigative hearings, 144 in total between 5 August and 31 October, focusing on ISIL defendants. The report enumerates concerns in relation to those trials and hearings, including prosecutions for association with terrorist groups without distinction between defendants who had perpetrated violence and those who had connected with ISIL in order to survive, and the use of “confessions allegedly obtained under duress”.

On 1 July, Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Mahdi issued an executive order bringing the

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## Iraq

“Popular Mobilization Forces” (PMF) under the exclusive control of the Iraqi state. The PMF was established in 2014 from different mostly Iran-backed Shia Muslim fighters for the fight against ISIL. The executive order further announced that the PMF had to cut all links with political entities and warned that armed groups operating outside the control of the Iraqi state were illegal and subject to prosecution. The Secretary-General, in his latest report on UNAMI, reiterates the importance of the implementation of this executive order as part of broader security sector reform.

On 26 November, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, addressed the Council on his third report in a briefing and consultations. Kachi, a civil society representative, also briefed (via video-conference). Support for UNITAD is part of UNAMI’s mandate.

At press time, the UN’s 2019 humanitarian response plan for Iraq of \$611.7 million was funded at 88 percent, with \$82.57 million outstanding.

### Women, Peace and Security

The Secretary-General reports a lack of funding for gender-based violence programming in Iraq which delivers essential services, psycho-social support and case management. The shortfall stands at more than \$20 million. As a consequence, some camps for refugees and internally displaced persons have no gender-based

violence programming at all and vital services in camps and for host communities have been cut. Serious incidents of gender-based violence perpetrated by armed actors continue to be reported in several governorates, including in camps.

UNAMI continues to support Iraq in electoral matters, including on gender mainstreaming. For instance, staff of the Independent High Electoral Commission took part in a workshop co-organised by UNAMI’s Senior Gender Adviser and its Office of Electoral Assistance on gender-responsiveness in electoral processes. The Secretary-General further reiterates his call for “immediate appointments of Iraq’s many talented, qualified women to senior decision-making positions.” He welcomes the appointment of a female Minister of Education, Suha Ali Bek, noting that she is the only female member of the current Iraqi government. Of the 23 chairs of Iraqi parliamentary committees (of which three are yet to be appointed), three are now held by women parliamentarians: the Culture, Tourism, and Archaeology Committee; the Higher Education Committee; and the Women, Family, and Childhood Committee. In relation to the ongoing demonstrations, Al-Mahdi made commitments for further reforms, which would also entail appointing new ministers, based on merit, and include more women.

### Issues and Options

An immediate option for Council members would be to issue a statement voicing concern over the destabilising effect the protest-related violence may have for the whole of Iraq and supporting the work of UNAMI in its plan for next steps.

As chair of the 1518 Iraqi Sanctions Committee, Poland could seize the momentum

and political will of Council members and the Iraqi government to further advance the delisting of entities and follow-up on concrete proposals on the unfreezing of Iraqi assets.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally unanimous in their support for UNAMI, Iraq’s post-ISIL reconstruction needs, and the positive development of Iraq-Kuwait relations.

They are following the events on the ground. Members may differ in their assessment of the role the Council should play in relation to the demonstrations, as some Council members may see them as an internal matter for Iraq.

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq: the Iraqi government routinely makes clear that Iraq has no intention of taking sides and becoming a theatre for regional and Iran-US tensions. Iraq is also affected by the conflict dynamics in neighbouring Syria, including the issue of 30,000 Iraqi nationals currently in al-Hawl refugee camp in Syria.

Turkey continues to have troops stationed in Iraq, over Iraq’s objections.

The US is the penholder on Iraq issues in general, and the UK is the penholder on Iraq-Kuwait issues and UNITAD. Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland) is the chair of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee; on 1 January 2020, she is likely to be succeeded by Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia).

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## Somalia

### Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is expected to adopt a resolution renewing counter-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia which expire on 6 December.

The mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) expires on 31 March 2020. The Council authorisation of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) expires on 31 May 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

The armed group Al-Shabaab remains active and dangerous, carrying out attacks targeting civilians, government facilities and personnel, security forces, and international partners. The final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the Somalia Sanctions Committee, released on 1 November, asserts that Al-Shabaab remains a potent threat to regional peace and security and is responsible for

many attacks against civilians in violation of international humanitarian law. During the reporting period, it has forcibly recruited and abducted hundreds of children as well as targeting parliamentarians, government officials, and humanitarian workers. The panel found that Al-Shabaab employed improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to kill and injure civilians in internally displaced persons camps, restaurants, marketplaces, shopping centres,

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2498](#) (15 November 2019) extended various elements of the Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2020. [S/RES/2472](#) (31 May 2019) renewed the authorisation of AMISOM until 31 May 2020 and authorised reductions to achieve a maximum level of 19,626 uniformed AMISOM personnel by 28 February 2020. [S/RES/2461](#) (27 March 2019) renewed the mandate of UNSOM until 31 March 2020. [S/RES/2442](#) (6 November 2018) was a resolution concerning piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia. [Secretary-General’s Reports S/2019/661](#) (15 August 2019) was the most recent report on Somalia and UNSOM. [S/2019/280](#) (29 March 2019) was the Secretary-General’s latest report on conflict-related sexual violence. [Security Council Letter S/2019/627](#) (2 August 2019) was from the Secretary-General on developments towards the normalisation of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8671](#) (21 November 2019) was the briefing by Special Representative and head of UNSOM James Swan. [S/PV.8665](#) (15 November 2019) was the meeting in which resolution 2498 renewing elements of the Somalia sanctions regime were adopted. [S/PV.8647](#) (25 October 2019) was a briefing by the Chair of the Somalia Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium). [Sanctions-Related Document S/2019/858](#) (1 November 2019) was the final report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia.

# Somalia

government offices and hotels.

The security situation, along with droughts and other climate-related issues, continues to be a driver of displacement. Severe flooding since 21 October has affected more than 547,000 people, of whom 370,000 have been displaced from their homes, according to the UNHCR-led Protection and Return Monitoring Network. Vast farmland and crops were also destroyed in the floods triggered by heavier than usual Deyr seasonal rains.

On sanctions, in resolution 2498 of 15 November, the Council renewed for one year the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces, the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports and charcoal exports, and humanitarian exemptions to the sanctions regime. The resolution also renewed the mandate of the Somalia Panel of Experts until 15 December 2020. China, Equatorial Guinea and Russia abstained.

A new element in the sanctions regime concerns explosives imported to Somalia for civilian purposes. States are to prevent the direct or indirect sale to Somalia of certain chemicals—used by Al-Shabaab to manufacture home-made explosives—if there is sufficient evidence or significant risk that they may be used to manufacture IEDs in Somalia. In addition, the delivery of such chemicals more generally will be subject to prior notification to the committee.

Resolution 2498 also addresses Somalia's lack of cooperation with the committee over the last year, including by not granting visas to all its members. The government continues to be of the view that the arms embargo should be amended to allow it to import heavy weapons without authorisation from the sanctions committee, and takes issue with the composition of the Panel of Experts and some of its findings. The resolution expresses 'serious concern' over the lack of Somali cooperation with a Security Council-mandated panel and urges Somalia to cooperate fully, including by setting dates for a country visit by the panel "without further delay".

On reconciliation efforts between Djibouti

and Eritrea, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to update the Council on any developments on this issue by 31 July 2020. (Resolution 2444 of 14 November 2018 lifted sanctions on Eritrea and, at the same time, requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council by 15 February 2019 and every six months thereafter on efforts by the parties peacefully to settle their border dispute and their dispute on the whereabouts of Djiboutian combatants missing in action.)

The Council was last briefed on Somalia on 21 November. Special Representative and head of UNSOM James Swan, AU Special Representative for Somalia and head of AMISOM Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Chair of the Somali National Independent Electoral Commission Halima Ismail Ibrahim, and Executive Director of the Somalia Youth Development Network Osman Moalim briefed the Council. The briefing was followed by consultations. On 25 November, Council members issued a press statement, welcoming the commitment expressed by Somalia to ensure that the historic federal one-person-one-vote elections are held in late 2020/early 2021. They underlined that holding peaceful, inclusive, credible and transparent elections will assist Somalia's continued democratic development.

## Women, Peace and Security

The Panel of Experts, in its final report, concludes that "sexual- and gender-based violence remained a persistent issue during the reporting period", with women and girls facing the greatest risk. Such crimes include rape, gang rape, and abduction for forced marriage. The report elaborates that Somalia's government institutions have "little capacity to record instances of, conduct investigations into and prosecute the perpetrators of sexual violence" due to the ongoing conflict in the country, which further gives survivors little faith in the formal justice system. The Panel of Experts reports 271 UN-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2018. The number includes violence against 250 girls, 20 women, and one boy. According to the latest annual Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence, the UN verified cases of gang rape and rape committed by the Somali Police Forces (twelve girls and five women) and the Somali National Army (44 girls and one boy). Thirty-four

cases of girls abducted for forced marriage and rape were attributed to Al-Shabaab members.

## Key Issues and Options

The key immediate issue for the Council in December is renewing the counter-piracy measures.

Somalia's lack of cooperation with the Sanctions Committee and its Panel of Experts is another issue. If Somalia continues to refuse to allow the Panel of Experts to visit, the Council may consider adopting a presidential or press statement focusing on this non-cooperation and urging Somalia's implementation of its resolutions.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

The negotiations over the renewal of sanctions and exemptions demonstrated unanimity among Council members over the main elements of the sanctions regime. Disagreements arose over other elements, however. Noting that sanctions on Eritrea were lifted last year, China and Russia stated in their explanation of vote that the dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea is a bilateral one that does not require the attention of the Council. Equatorial Guinea also said that issues unrelated to Somalia should not be covered in the resolution. All three countries abstained as a result.

There was also disagreement about a German proposal requesting the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict to share relevant information with the committee, and inviting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to do so as well, as appropriate. While this proposal enjoyed the support of most Council members, both China and Russia took issue with a reference in the resolution to the committee's receiving human rights information, though eventually this passage was included in resolution 2498.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia and the US is the penholder on piracy. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) is the Chair of the Somalia Sanctions Committee.

# Syria

## Expected Council Action

In December, the Council will receive the monthly Syria briefings on the humanitarian situation, political developments, and the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Council members are expected to negotiate the renewal of the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access, which was most recently extended through resolution 2449 adopted on 13 December 2018 and which expires on 10 January 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

The security and humanitarian situation in north-eastern Syria remains challenging and fluid. Since late October, Russian and Turkish troops have continued to patrol sections of Syria's north-eastern border with Turkey. Having withdrawn its forces from areas near the Syria-Turkish border in October, the US subsequently decided to maintain a military presence in Syria with the declared goal of fighting terrorism and protecting oil fields. Since Turkey initiated its military campaign on 9 October, OCHA has reported that 190,000 people have been displaced, of whom—at press time—over 74,000 remain displaced, while 14,000 have gone across the border into Iraq.

After Russia announced a unilateral ceasefire in north-western Syria on 30 August, the level of violence decreased. However, recent weeks have seen an uptick in fighting in north-western Syria, where there are hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs). On 20 November, a missile reportedly fired from Syrian government territory hit an IDP camp in Kah, killing at least 12 civilians.

On 30 October, the Syria Constitutional Committee was launched in Geneva. It consists of 150 participants, with 50 each from the government, the opposition, and civil society. During the meeting to initiate the Committee, Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen reiterated that this is a Syrian-owned and -led process, while the Committee agreed on the 45 participants who will make up the “Small Group”, the constitution-drafting body. On 8 November, Pedersen held a press conference in which he noted that Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, its state institutions, the

rule of law, and terrorism, among other issues, were discussed by the Small Group during its first week of deliberations. The Small Group is expected to reconvene on 25 November.

In a 31 October television interview, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said that while the pro-government group of the Constitutional Committee “represents the viewpoint of the Syrian government...the Syrian government is not part of these negotiations nor of these discussions”.

Secretary-General António Guterres met with Turkish President Recep Erdoğan in Istanbul on 1 November. During the meeting, Erdoğan shared a Turkish plan to resettle refugees who have been in Turkey. Guterres said that the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) would study the plan and discuss it with Turkish officials. He also emphasised principles related to the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees.

Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and Izumi Nakamitsu, the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, briefed the Security Council on the use of chemical weapons in Syria in a private meeting on 5 November. Arias apparently noted that there are gaps in Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons stocks. He said that the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), established to identify perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria following a June 2018 decision of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), was focusing its work on nine incidents.

On 22 November, the Council adopted a presidential statement welcoming the briefing of the Director-General of the OPCW and reaffirming its strong support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and for the work of the OPCW in accordance with the Convention.

On 14 November, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock briefed the Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria. He said that it was critical that the provisions of resolution 2165, which authorised the delivery of cross-border and

cross-line aid, be renewed. In this connection, he stated: “Without the cross-border operation, we would see an immediate end of aid that is supporting millions of civilians; that would cause a rapid increase in hunger and disease. A lot more people would flood across the borders, making an existing crisis in the region even worse”.

On 22 November, Special Envoy Pedersen and Sabah al-Hallak, a Syrian activist who serves on the Constitutional Committee, briefed during the Council's monthly meeting on the Syria political track. Pedersen called the launch of the Constitutional Committee a “sign of hope for the Syrian people” but expressed concern about renewed violence in the country and said that if “confidence is to develop among the Syrian people in the political process, the dynamics on the ground need to begin to change”. Al-Hallak, speaking in her capacity as a board member of the Syrian Women's League and a founding member of the Syrian League for Citizenship, described the devastating impact of the conflict on civilians, especially women and girls. She urged the Council to pressure all parties to the conflict to adhere to international law.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 8 November, a spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights said that dozens of people had been killed and injured in north-eastern and north-western Syria from a variety of causes, including airstrikes, ground-based strikes, and increasingly indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices in populated areas, including in local markets. From the 9 October launch of the Turkish-led military offensive in north-eastern Syria until 5 November, at least 92 civilians in northern and north-eastern Syria had been killed, the spokesperson said. Meanwhile, following a lull in hostilities in Idlib governorate during October, there was an upsurge in airstrikes and ground-based strikes in early November, mostly in parts of southern and western Idlib, including attacks affecting medical facilities, he added.

## Key Issues and Options

The delivery of cross-border and cross-line humanitarian aid, originally authorised through resolution 2165 in July 2014 and renewed several times since then, will be a key issue in the Council this month. While

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2449](#) (13 December 2018) was a resolution prepared by Sweden and Kuwait renewing the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria. [S/RES/2254](#) (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. [Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2019/14](#) (22 November 2019) reaffirmed the Council's strong support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and for the work of the OPCW in accordance with the Convention. [S/PRST/2019/12](#) (8 October 2019) welcomed the Secretary-General's announcement of the formation of the Constitutional Committee. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8674](#) (22 November 2019) was a meeting on the political situation in Syria. [S/PV.8664](#) (14 November 2019) was a meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria. [S/PV.8659](#) (6 November 2019) was the communiqué issued on the private meeting on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.



# Syria

the current authorisation under resolution 2449 expires on 10 January 2020, it appears that the humanitarian penholders—Belgium, Germany and Kuwait—will seek a renewal of the mandate in December, in keeping with past practice. In considering the mandate, the Council could emphasise the importance of maintaining the four currently-used border crossings.

Another important issue is how the Council can most effectively support the Special Envoy's work, including as facilitator of the Constitutional Committee. In this regard, members may underscore the need to create an environment conducive to negotiations through measures outlined in resolution 2254, which established a framework for a political process leading to a new constitution and elections. These measures include an end to attacks on civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities; a nationwide cease-fire, and confidence-building measures.

In the future, the Council will also need to consider how to approach a potential repatriation of Syrian refugees now in Turkey to north-eastern Syria. They may continue to reaffirm the importance of the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees in accordance with international law. One option that members could consider is an informal meeting with UNHCR to familiarise themselves with Turkey's resettlement plan and hear UNHCR's views on the plan.

## Council Dynamics

There is widespread agreement in the Council that the formation of the constitutional committee is a positive development, although several members have noted that this is only the first step in a broader political process that should lead to free and fair elections under UN supervision. Other issues that many members believe must be addressed to accompany a successful political process include unfettered humanitarian access, a cessation of hostilities, the release of detainees, the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the threat of terrorism. Several members, such as France, the UK, and the US, have emphasised that reconstruction aid will not be provided to Syria unless there is a legitimate political solution to the conflict.

Most Council members have increasingly emphasised the critical importance of cross-border humanitarian assistance in recent weeks, given that December is the month when this authorisation is typically renewed. In this respect, a wide range of Council members explicitly called for a renewal of the cross-border mechanism during the 14 November humanitarian briefing. Speaking on behalf of the humanitarian penholders, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) called the renewal “of prime importance” and said that this “mechanism continues to allow the United Nations and

its partners to ensure that life-saving assistance reaches millions of people”.

The successive reauthorisations of cross-border aid have not been without controversy, however. In 2017, Russia, China and Bolivia abstained on this reauthorisation (S/RES/2393), while Russia and China abstained on resolution 2449, which renewed the authorisation for cross-border assistance in 2018. In explaining its vote in 2018, Russia expressed concern that the resolution did not reflect that the aid delivery mechanism eventually needed to be removed given “new realities” in Syria. It asked, for example, why the Dar'a-Ramtha crossing—which is on the Syria/Jordan border—should continue to be covered by the resolution when Syria had control of its side of the border. China, for its part, said during the 14 November briefing that the mechanism “could benefit from greater transparency” and that improved coordination with the Syrian government would ensure that only humanitarian aid comes into the country and that it is not diverted to terrorist groups. Lowcock said at the same Council meeting that the cross-border aid delivery system “is one of the most closely scrutinized...in the world” and that “evidence of systemic aid diversion” had not been detected.

## UNOCA/LRA

### Expected Council Action

In December, François Louncény Fall, Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), is expected to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on UNOCA and the implementation of the UN regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

The mandate of UNOCA expires on 31 August 2021.

### Key Recent Developments

The region covered by UNOCA continues to present multiple challenges, including several security and political hotspots that are on the Council's agenda.

The Global Peace Agreement in the Central African Republic (CAR) was signed by the CAR government and 14 armed groups in Bangui on 6 February. It addresses justice and reconciliation, governance, and transitional security arrangements. On 22 March, after AU-hosted consultations in Addis

Ababa, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra announced the formation of a new cabinet, in which all 14 armed groups are represented.

On 15 November, the Council adopted resolution 2499, renewing the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 November 2020, within the current troop levels of 11,650 military personnel and 2,080 police personnel. The priority tasks of the mission are the protection of civilians, good offices

**UN DOCUMENTS ON UNOCA Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2499 (15 November 2019) extended the mandate of MINUSCA and the authorisation to use all means to provide operational support to MINUSCA until 15 November 2020. **S/RES/2488** (12 September 2019) amended the CAR sanctions regime for CAR security forces. **S/RES/2463** (29 March 2019) renewed MONUSCO's mandate until 20 December 2019. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/10** (12 September 2019) expressed the Council's full support for UNOCA. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2019/837** (24 October 2019) was the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Burundi. **S/2018/1065** (29 November 2018) was on UNOCA. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8652** (30 October 2019) was a briefing by Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi Michel Kafando. **S/PV.8538** (4 June 2019) was a briefing by François Louncény Fall, Special Representative and head of UNOCA. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13985** (14 October 2019) welcomed the inauguration of the new coalition government. **Security Council Letter S/2019/625** (1 August 2019) was from the Secretary-General to the president of the Security Council concerning UNOCA's strategic review.

and support to the peace process, support to preparations for peaceful elections, facilitating the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, and the promotion and protection of human rights.

On sanctions, in resolution 2488 of 12 September, the Council amended the arms embargo imposed on the CAR in previous resolutions. Most elements of the arms embargo remain in place, including those on the CAR security forces. However, the resolution exempts, after notifying the committee, supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use and supplies to the CAR security forces of weapons with a calibre of 14.5 mm or less that are intended solely for the support of or use in the CAR process of security sector reform. Under the previous sanctions regime, these supplies to the CAR security forces required prior approval from the committee.

After two years of election delays in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Félix Tshisekedi was inaugurated as president on 24 January. In a press statement on 14 October, Council members welcomed the inauguration of the new coalition government, announced on 26 August, as well as Tshisekedi's commitment to national unity, the rule of law, and the fight against corruption.

On 13 November, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed Council members on the independent strategic review of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The review discusses how to phase and draw down MONUSCO, including best/worst-case scenarios, and presents options for several types of future MONUSCO configurations. MONUSCO's mandate expires on 20 December. (For more on this see the DRC brief in this issue of the Forecast.)

The security and political situation in Burundi remains unsettled. While the Burundian government maintains that the security situation is good throughout the country, serious human rights abuses continue to be committed daily with impunity, mainly by the government and the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of President Pierre Nkurunziza's party.

Furthermore, these actions are taking place in an environment where freedom of expression, association and assembly are suppressed as the country prepares for elections in 2020.

Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi Michel Kafando briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's report on Burundi on 30 October. Kafando noted the tense situation in Burundi, with an increase in the level of political intolerance and a growing threat to civil and political freedoms. He further noted his concern that the inter-Burundian dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community has not rendered any dialogue over substantive issues, referring to a lack of political will by the Burundian government and the opposition, as well as neighbouring countries. Kafando also announced that he is stepping down as the Special Envoy. At press time, his successor has not been appointed.

On UNOCA's mandate, on 14 August, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita briefed Council members in consultations on the strategic review requested by the Council in a presidential statement on 10 August 2018. On 12 September, the Council adopted a presidential statement expressing its full support for UNOCA and noting the recommendations of the Secretary-General's strategic review regarding the scope of UNOCA's mandate and activities. It welcomed UNOCA's role in promoting inclusive political dialogue in non-mission settings such as Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome and Principe, in encouraging stability in the region, and in assisting the countries of the sub-region in consolidating peace, resolving tensions, and preventing or mitigating political crises.

### Key Issues and Options

A central issue for the whole area is the security situation in the region, including in CAR and eastern DRC.

The overall political situation in the DRC after Tshisekedi's election, the formation of a new government, and the implications for MONUSCO's mandate; the implementation of the CAR peace agreement; the political situation in Burundi ahead of the

2020 elections, and the potential regional implications of all these will continue to concern the Council.

With elections coming up in 2020-2021 in Burundi, CAR and the DRC, there is a common understanding that the next two years are critical for mid- and long-term stability in the Great Lakes Region.

Council members may continue to rely on UNOCA to call attention to situations in the Central Africa region that are not on the Council's agenda, such as Cameroon, where there has been unrest in the country's anglophone north-western and south-western regions, rooted in claims of long-standing political and economic discrimination by the francophone authorities against the anglophone minority.

### Council Dynamics

Council members, concerned about the political turmoil in several countries and the effect it could have on security and stability in the region, see UNOCA's role as potentially stabilising and are generally united in their ongoing support for this mandate.

There are, however, some differences regarding the role UNOCA should play in addressing different situations. During the consultations on UNOCA's strategic review, held on 14 August, some Council members expressed concern about the situation in Cameroon and argued that UNOCA should focus on the security and humanitarian situation in that country. Council members such as the UK and the US have expressed this view publicly, including following the latest UNOCA briefing on 4 June. Other Council members, such as China and Russia, maintain that the situation in Cameroon is an internal one in which the Council should intervene only upon Cameroon's request.

The UK is the penholder on UNOCA. Ambassador Kacou Houadjia Léon Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) chairs the 2127 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee. Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) chairs the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee. On 1 January 2020, both are likely to be succeeded by Ambassador Abdou A Barry (Niger).

# International Criminal Tribunals

## Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council expects to hold its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), which was established in 2010 to carry out the remaining essential functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) after their respective closures. The IRMCT's president, Judge Carmel Agius, and prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, are expected to brief during the debate. They may also meet with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to this. No outcome is expected. Council members expect to receive the bi-annual assessment reports of the president and the prosecutor by 2 December.

The mandate of the IRMCT expires on 30 June 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

The IRMCT, with branches in The Hague, Netherlands, and Arusha, Tanzania, focuses on the completion of trials and appeals from the ICTY, which closed in December 2017, and the ICTR, which closed in December 2015. Its tasks include locating and arresting the eight remaining fugitives indicted by the ICTR, and assisting national jurisdictions in handling requests related to prosecuting international crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. ICTR was established by resolution 1966 in 2010, which says that “the Mechanism shall continue the jurisdiction, rights and obligations and essential functions of the ICTY and the ICTR”, and that it “should be a small, temporary and efficient structure, whose functions and size will diminish over time, with a small number of staff commensurate with its reduced functions”.

Under resolution 1966, the IRMCT was mandated to operate for an initial period of four years and for subsequent periods of two years unless the Security Council decides otherwise. The Council most recently extended the IRMCT's operating period (and Brammertz's term) until 30 June 2020 in resolution 2422 adopted on 27 June 2018, with 14 votes

in favour and Russia abstaining. The resolution requested the IRMCT to continue to take steps to enhance its efficiency and effective and transparent management, including “more focused projections of completion timelines and disciplined adherence thereto”; “enhancement of the geographic diversity and gender balance of staff, while ensuring continued professional expertise”; and “further reduction of costs, including through, but not limited to, flexible staff engagement”. It requested that the IRMCT update the Council in its semi-annual reports on progress achieved in implementing the resolution.

On 24 October, Agius (who assumed the presidency on 19 January) briefed the General Assembly on the seventh annual report of the IRMCT, covering 1 July 2018 to 30 June. He highlighted that most of the current caseload is expected to conclude by the end of 2020 and emphasised that next year will be an extremely busy one for the IRMCT for this reason, and also with at least two major judgments expected to be issued. In order to wind up its work and avoid delays, the IRMCT will require the necessary resources and support, he said. Agius also recalled that the Mechanism is tasked with a range of other residual functions that will continue once the core judicial work is completed, including supervising the enforcement of sentences, protecting victims and witnesses, providing assistance to national jurisdictions, monitoring cases referred to national jurisdictions, and preserving and managing the archives of the IRMCT and its predecessor Tribunals.

In relation to the tracking and arrest of the eight remaining fugitives indicted by the ICTR, Agius noted that South Africa is yet to execute an arrest warrant issued by the IRMCT's Prosecutor for a fugitive located in that country. The Office of the Prosecutor first submitted an urgent request for assistance to South Africa on 16 August 2018 on the basis of a confirmation provided by INTERPOL. He also appealed to member states over the problem of relocating nine individuals who have been either acquitted or released by the ICTR but are unable or afraid to return to their country of citizenship.

The last semi-annual debate on the

IRMCT was held on 17 July, with briefings by Agius and Brammertz. Agius expressed his commitment to the efficient and timely conclusion of judicial proceedings at both the Arusha and The Hague branches of the IRMCT; enhancing inter-branch coordination and harmonisation of practices and procedures; and fostering a working environment that encourages high staff morale and performance. Brammertz told the Council that his office “is firmly focused on completing our remaining functions efficiently and effectively”. He added that his office “is generating credible intelligence on the current whereabouts of several fugitives”, however, the cooperation needed from member states to secure arrests has so far been lacking.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue is for members to continue monitoring the work of the IRMCT and the implementation of its mandate, including the areas specified in resolution 2422.

## Council Dynamics

With the exception of Russia, Council members generally assess positively the IRMCT and the progress it has made. Russia, which had also been consistently critical of the ICTY, said in its statement at the briefing on 17 July that it would “not contribute any funding to the part of the UN budget that has been designated for” the IRMCT. South Africa said it believes “states have an international obligation to cooperate with the Mechanism and the Prosecutor” and that South Africa does “not support impunity”. In relation to the execution of the arrest warrant issued by the IRMCT's Prosecutor for a fugitive located in that country, South Africa said, “our competent domestic authorities are actively seized of the matter and have been in contact with the Office of the Prosecutor with a view to finding solutions”.

Peru is the chair of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals until it leaves the Council at the end of the year. Incoming Council member Viet Nam is expected to take over as chair, starting in January 2020.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2422 (27 June 2018) extended the term of the IRMCT's prosecutor until 30 June 2020. S/RES/1966 (22 December 2010) established the IRMCT. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8576 (17 July 2019) was the semi-annual debate. Security Council Letter S/2019/417 (20 May 2019) was a letter transmitting the assessment reports of the president and of the prosecutor of the IRMCT.

# Yemen

## Expected Council Action

In December, the Council will receive its monthly briefing on Yemen from Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock may brief on the humanitarian situation, and General Abhijit Guha, the head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) and chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC), is likely to brief in consultations.

The mandate of UNMHA expires on 15 January 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

Several important developments increased prospects for resuming national political talks on ending Yemen's war. A power-sharing agreement was signed on 5 November between the internationally recognised government of Yemen and the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), which seized control of Yemen's interim capital of Aden in August. It was also reported in November that Saudi Arabia, which leads a military coalition supporting the Yemeni government, was in talks with the Houthi rebel group.

The Riyadh Agreement was brokered during talks mediated by Saudi Arabia in Jeddah and later Riyadh, averting a possible second civil war and the fracturing of the anti-Houthi coalition. Fighting between the government and southern militias during August had spread to other southern governorates as the STC sought to take over the territory of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. A government counter-offensive to re-take Aden came under attack by coalition member the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has supported the STC. The 5 November signing ceremony in Riyadh for the Riyadh Agreement, initially delayed after its 24 October announcement, was attended by President Abdo Raboo Mansour Hadi, STC President Aidarus al-Zoubaidi, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman, and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed.

The agreement sets out a series of political, economic, military and security arrangements. A "technocrat" government of no more than 24 ministers, to be selected based on their competence, integrity and expertise, should be formed within 30 days of the

agreement's signing. Ministerial portfolios are to be shared equally between northern and southern governorates. Prior to this, the prime minister should resume his functions in Aden within seven days of the accord's signing (on 18 November, Prime Minister Ma'een Abdulmalek Saeed returned to Aden). Deadlines are stipulated for President Hadi to appoint a governor and security chief for Aden governorate (within fifteen days), governors for Abyan and al-Dhale (within thirty days) and governors and security chiefs in the remaining southern governorates (within sixty days). All state revenues, including from oil, customs and taxes, should be deposited in the Central Bank in Aden. Among several measures outlined in the accord to combat corruption is that the Yemeni parliament, which last met in May in Sayoun, is to monitor revenues and expenditures.

A series of timelines are set out to fulfil military and security reforms to unify government and STC-affiliated forces. All sides should return to the locations and barracks they occupied before last August's outbreak of fighting, and be replaced by security forces of local authorities within 15 days. In Aden, the sides' medium and heavy weapons such as tanks, armoured troop carriers, artillery, heavy mortars and rockets should be relocated within 15 days to camps that will be supervised by coalition forces. Within 30 days of the agreement's signing, all military forces of the government and STC should relocate to barracks outside Aden governorate. An exemption is made for the First Presidential Protection Brigade. The agreement further envisions uniting all military forces in the south under the Ministry of Defense in Aden, Abyan and Lahaj governorates within 60 days, and the forces in other southern governorates within ninety days.

A similar series of security arrangements are outlined for police and special and counter-terrorism forces that will be placed under the authority of the Minister of Interior. This includes forming a "Key Installations Protection Force" to protect civil installations, including the Central Bank, government ministries, ports and airports.

Saudi Arabia will take a leadership role over a committee tasked with following up and implementing the agreement. Saudi forces began to replace Emirati forces in

Aden already in October, and Saudi Arabia is expected to take a new leading role militarily in the south as the UAE continues to draw down its armed forces in Yemen, a process that began in June. Another important aspect is the agreement's stipulation that the STC will be represented in the government delegation in future peace talks with the Houthis.

In a 5 November press release, Griffiths described the agreement as "an important step for our collective efforts to advance a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Yemen." A 6 November Security Council press statement said that the Riyadh Agreement represents "a positive and important step towards a comprehensive and inclusive political solution for Yemen."

In mid-November, both Saudi and Houthi officials confirmed that Saudi Arabia and the Houthis were holding informal talks regarding a possible cease-fire, according to media reports. It was reported that the talks, facilitated by Oman, started shortly after the 14 September Houthi-claimed Aramco oil facility attacks.

The Council was briefed on developments by Griffiths (via video-teleconference) and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller on 22 November. Guha briefed members during consultations via video-teleconference. Earlier in the month, Guha released statements highlighting incidents that contravene the ceasefire in Hodeidah as part of the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement, including the construction of new fortifications, movement of forces, and use of drones.

On 18 November, the Houthis seized a Saudi-flagged vessel towing a South Korean drilling rig in the Red Sea, demonstrating the risks posed by the Yemen war to navigation through this major shipping route.

## Key Issues and Options

Restarting negotiations for a broader solution to the conflict, while at the same time advancing the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and the new Riyadh Agreement, are key issues. The Yemeni government has continued to appear hesitant about restarting peace talks before the Stockholm Agreement's implementation. December marks one year since the agreement between the government and the Houthis, with only

**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2481 (15 July 2019) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 15 January 2020. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/9 (29 August 2019) was on developments in southern Yemen and efforts to resume comprehensive political negotiations. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8672 (22 November 2019) was a briefing on Yemen. Security Council Press Statement SC/14017 (6 November 2019) welcomed the signing of the Riyadh Agreement.

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# Yemen

limited progress in implementing its various components: the demilitarisation of the critical port city of Hodeidah, a prisoner exchange, and a statement of understanding on Taiz. Regarding the Riyadh Agreement, deadlines for its implementation are considered highly ambitious, especially in respect of military and security arrangements.

An option for the Council is to adopt a presidential statement that expresses further support for the recent Riyadh Agreement while reiterating strong support for the Special Envoy's efforts to resume negotiations on a comprehensive political settlement in parallel to implementing the Stockholm Agreement. Moreover, the Council may want to continue to monitor implementation of the agreements and their components closely, with an option of reacting with statements praising progress and expressing concern in cases of serious delays or breaches.

The humanitarian crisis—currently the largest in the world, with 24 million people requiring assistance—remains severe. In its monthly updates, OCHA usually briefs on a number of key priorities to mitigate the situation, which the Council has acknowledged in several products: the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, a fully funded aid operation, support for Yemen's struggling economy, and the need for a political solution. A presidential statement could include reiterating calls for unhindered access for humanitarian actors, particularly amidst reports of an increasingly constrained operating environment in the Houthi-controlled north. It could further direct a strong call on Houthi authorities to facilitate a UN inspection mission of the SAFER oil tanker, which risks causing an environmental disaster in the Red Sea.

## Council Dynamics

There appears to be consensus among Council members in wanting the parties to restart a political process concurrently with efforts to implement the Stockholm Agreement. Coalition member Kuwait, which for much of this past year underscored the need to implement the Stockholm accord before returning to talks, now seems to support moving forward with both processes at once and has offered to host future negotiations. It previously hosted talks for three months in 2016. A new 'small group' of states seeking to support the UN-led peace process for Yemen was formed in September, made up of the P5, Germany, Kuwait and non-Council member Sweden.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Peru chairs the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee; on 1 January 2020 it is expected to be succeeded by Ambassador Inga Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

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# Sudan (Darfur)

## Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will receive the semi-annual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor related to the court's work on Darfur. Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland), chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, is expected to provide the quarterly briefing to Council members on the Committee's work.

The mandate of the UN/AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) expires on 31 October 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

On 31 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2495 extending the mandate of UNAMID until 31 October 2020, as requested by Sudanese prime minister Abdalla Hamdok in a 22 October letter to the Secretary-General. The resolution decides that UNAMID will maintain its current troop and police ceilings until 31 March 2020. In this regard, it takes note of the recommendation to do so made in the 15 October special

report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General. The resolution also states that after 31 March 2020, the Council will decide on "courses of action regarding the responsible drawdown and exit of UNAMID" and "adopt a new resolution at the same time, establishing a follow-on presence to UNAMID". In relation to reporting, it requests the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission to provide the Security Council with a special report by 31 January 2020, including an assessment of the situation on the ground, an update on the peace process, information on the status of UNAMID team sites previously handed over to the government, and recommendations on the appropriate course of action regarding the drawdown of UNAMID, as well as options for a follow-on presence to UNAMID.

All five ICC arrest warrants in the Darfur situation remain in force. Former president Omar al-Bashir remains in detention in Khartoum, facing trial on domestic corruption

and other charges. Two other suspects in the Darfur situation, Abdel Raheem Hussein and Ahmad Harun, are also reportedly being detained in Khartoum. On 4 November, the Forces for Freedom and Change Coalition (FFC) said in a statement that it is urging the country's transitional government to hand over al-Bashir to the ICC.

On 17 October, the Council was briefed on the special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General on UNAMID by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix. He told the Council that the Sudanese government had requested more time to formulate its needs for a possible follow-on mechanism to UNAMID and recommended that UNAMID retain the same ceiling of uniformed personnel for an initial period of six months, which coincides with the anticipated duration of peace talks. The peace talks between the transitional government, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2495 (31 October 2019) renewed UNAMID's mandate until 31 October 2020. S/RES/2429 (13 July 2018) renewed UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019. Secretary-General's Reports S/2019/816 (15 October 2019) was the special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General on UNAMID. S/2018/530 (1 June 2018) was the special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General on the strategic review of UNAMID. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8654 (31 October 2019) was the meeting to adopt resolution 2495. S/PV.8643 (17 October 2019) was a briefing on the special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General on UNAMID. S/PV.8632 (3 October 2019) was the quarterly briefing of the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. S/PV.8554 (19 June 2019) was the semi-annual briefing by ICC Prosecutor Bensouda.

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## Sudan (Darfur)

(SPLM-N) led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu are aimed at concluding a peace agreement to end the armed conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas (South Kordofan and Blue Nile State). On 19 November, the talks, which were scheduled to resume on 21 November, were postponed until 10 December.

In her last semi-annual briefing on 19 June, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda stressed that Sudan remains under a legal obligation to transfer suspects to the ICC to stand trial unless it can demonstrate to the ICC judges that it is willing and genuinely able to prosecute them for the same cases. Bensouda added that she was “ready to engage in dialogue with the authorities in the Sudan to ensure that the Darfur suspects face independent and impartial justice, either in a courtroom in The Hague or in the Sudan”.

### Sanctions Committee Developments

On 3 October, Ambassador Wronecka provided the quarterly briefing to Council members on the committee’s work. She outlined aspects of the interim report of the Panel of Experts, covering 13 March to 3 August, a report which is not made public. According to the briefing, the report documented that the security situation in Darfur was characterised by localised security incidents, including intercommunal skirmishes, militia attacks on civilians, tensions in major internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and clashes in Jebel Marra. The report also documented violations of international humanitarian law, human rights abuses, rape and sexual violence against communities in Darfur, including IDPs, and that the lack of fully functioning civilian institutions, such as police forces and courts, contributed to impunity for human rights violations. Darfuri armed groups operating in Libya have engaged

in military operations alongside their Libyan partners, according to the report. Wronecka visited South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Sudan from 6 to 15 October and travelled to Sudan, including Khartoum and Darfur, from 11 to 14 November.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue is for the Council to continue closely monitoring the situation in Darfur and the impact of the broader political situation in the country. Another issue is assessing the potential effect of further troop reductions on the security and human rights situations. A related issue is assessing options for a follow-on presence to UNAMID. One option would be for these assessments to be informed by the findings and recommendations of the special report requested in resolution 2495, which members expect to receive by 31 January 2020.

### Council Dynamics

The issue of the scope and pace of UNAMID’s drawdown, reconfiguration, and eventual exit has been contentious among Council members in the past (see our What’s In Blue stories in 2017, 2018 and 2019). Resolution 2429, renewing UNAMID’s mandate in July last year, took note of the recommendations in the 1 June 2018 special report of the Secretary-General and Chairperson of the AU, which stated that the mission would exit in June 2020 “provided that there is no significant change in the security situation in Darfur and key indicators are fulfilled”.

Some members, in particular, Russia, have been adamant in the past that the

mission should withdraw by June 2020. At the most recent briefing, on 17 October, Russia said that “it is essential to stay the course for the phased drawdown and withdrawal of UNAMID in accordance with the time frame established in resolution 2429”, while adding that “the opinion of the government in Khartoum, as the host party, should be decisive in every case”. It seems the letter from Hamdok requesting a one-year extension of the mission’s mandate made negotiations on the issue of the timing of the mission’s exit uncontentious, with all members seeking to support his request.

Following the adoption of resolution 2495 on 31 October, the UK said that the “resolution also sends a clear message to all stakeholders in the peace process that they must seize the opportunity before them to establish a comprehensive peace” and that they looked forward to receiving options for a follow-on mission to UNAMID in early 2020. Germany said in its statement that “such a transition has to be informed by the conditions on the ground, which we should consider carefully before making our next decision on the drawdown of UNAMID”. The US said it “fully expects this to be the final extension” of UNAMID and “supports a follow-on UN mission with a countrywide mandate to continue assistance to the new Sudanese government”.

The UK and Germany are co-penholders on the issue. Poland chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until the end of the year, after which incoming Council member Estonia is expected to chair the committee.

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## UNDOF (Golan Heights)

### Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is expected to extend for six months the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which expires on 31 December. Ahead of the mandate renewal, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief Council members in consultations on the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due in December, and the most recent developments.

### Key Recent Developments

UNDOF was established following the conclusion of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria, which ended the Yom Kippur war. UNDOF is mandated to maintain the ceasefire between the parties and supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces as well as the so-called areas of separation (a demilitarised buffer zone) and limitation (where Israeli and Syrian troops and equipment are restricted)

in the Golan Heights. The implementation of the mandate entails observing any violations of the 1974 Agreement, reporting them, and liaising with both sides. The mission’s observation role has been limited since its September 2014 relocation from the Bravo (Syrian) to the Alpha (Israeli-occupied) side because of the armed conflict in Syria. As of 17 September, UNDOF comprises 1,184 personnel and has a budget of \$2,762,400 from July 2019 through June 2020. The UN

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UN DOCUMENTS ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2477 (26 June 2019) renewed the mandate of UNDOF until 31 December 2019. Secretary-General’s Report S/2019/774 (24 September 2019) was the latest report on UNDOF.

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## UNDOF (Golan Heights)

Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Observer Group Golan continues to provide UNDOF with military observers.

The Secretary-General's 24 September report, covering the period from 30 May to 17 September, said that the ceasefire between Israel and Syria was being maintained. Violations of the 1974 Agreement occurred, however. On both the Alpha and the Bravo side, military equipment was present in the area of limitation. Additionally, UNDOF noted Syrian armed forces still present in the area of separation, where only UNDOF military forces are permitted. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continued to fire across the ceasefire line and into the area of separation. On 1 June, according to the IDF, projectiles originating from the Bravo side were fired towards a ski resort in the Mount Hermon area on the Alpha side. UNTSO found a crater and indications of a projectile having been fired from the south-east. UNDOF personnel also continued to observe daily crossings by unidentified individuals (farmers and shepherds tending livestock) from the Bravo side. In order to deter such crossings of the ceasefire line, UNDOF started putting up warning signs. UNDOF has protested all violations of the 1974 Agreement and called upon both sides to exercise restraint, in line with its mandate to observe violations, report them and liaise with both sides.

UNDOF's operating environment experienced changes over the last year due to Syria's regaining control over areas formerly held by different opposition armed actors. UNDOF made further progress towards a limited return to operations on the Bravo side, including a reoccupation of two observation posts; its patrol routes were able to cover about 50 per cent of the area of limitation and about 90 per cent of the area of separation. The Secretary-General's report stresses, however, that there continues to be "a significant threat" to

UNDOF personnel in its area of operations, originating from explosive remnants of war and the possibility of "sleeper cells of armed groups, including listed terrorist groups." The Secretary-General emphasises the need for both Israel and Syria to support the clearance of explosive remnants of war, and also refers to incidents of "assassination and attempted assassinations" of Syrian opposition leaders that had supposedly reconciled with the Syrian government, as reported by open sources.

UNDOF was able to regularly utilise the Qunaytirah crossing point (which reopened in October 2018 after having been closed since 2014) to move personnel and equipment, conversations with the IDF on increased facilitation of its use continue to be ongoing. On 15 July, UNDOF reoccupied a position at the crossing full-time. In the report's observations, the Secretary-General underlines that UNDOF has to be able to fully utilise the crossing point in order to implement its mandate. Likewise, UNDOF continues to face restrictions of movement and access to their positions by the IDF in the area of separation.

On 16 October, Council members were briefed in consultations on the 24 September report and the most recent developments by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

On 16 September, Brigadier General Maureen O'Brien of Ireland assumed the position of Deputy Force Commander of UNDOF. Major General Shivaram Kharel of Nepal continues to be the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander. He was appointed to the post on 29 May, following the sudden death of Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri of Ghana on 19 April.

On 18 November, the IDF reported that their Iron Dome defence systems had intercepted four rockets launched from Syria towards the Alpha side. UNDOF considers the Iron Dome systems "unauthorized

military equipment in the area of limitation", a violation of the 1974 Agreement, as regularly stated in the Secretary-General's reports.

### Key Issues and Options

Ongoing issues for the Council are the numerous violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974. UNDOF's ability to implement its mandate, including its eventual full return to the Bravo side, has been a key issue since 2014. Regarding the mandate renewal, the Council's options are restricted, as how UNDOF operates is subject solely to the 1974 Agreement. Any changes in the mandate would require agreement by Israel and Syria, which remains unlikely. Bearing that in mind, the Council could renew UNDOF's mandate for a period longer than six months. The Council might further consider changing the Secretary-General's reporting cycle back to six months instead of 90 days, which had been the practice until December 2012.

### Council Dynamics

There is general agreement within the Council that UNDOF's mandate, including its liaison function, contributes to stability in the region, given the absence of a peace agreement between Israel and Syria, both of which still value UNDOF's presence and want to see the mission's full return to the Bravo side. Council members also support its eventual complete return, mindful of the fact that this would require a continuously favourable security environment, which is also crucial for maintaining the confidence of troop-contributing countries.

Russia and the US are the co-penholders on UNDOF. Despite the deep divisions between the co-penholders regarding the Syria file, both countries are expected to continue to consider UNDOF as a separate issue.

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## West Africa and the Sahel

### Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council is expected to hold a briefing on intercommunal violence

and terrorism in West Africa. Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) Mohammed

Ibn Chambas is expected to brief.

During the month, the Council is also expected to renew UNOWAS' mandate for

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL** Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2019/7 (7 August 2019) was on West Africa and the Sahel and activities of UNOWAS. S/PRST/2018/16 (10 August 2018) expressed concern over increased tensions between pastoralists and farmers in the region. Security Council Letters S/2019/890 (15 November 2019) transmitted the strategic review of UNOWAS. S/2016/1128 – S/2016/1129 (27 December 2016; 29 December 2013) was an exchange of letters between the president of the Security Council and the Secretary-General renewing the mandate of UNOWAS until 31 December 2019.

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## West Africa and the Sahel

an additional three years. This is likely to be done through an exchange of letters between the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General. UNOWAS' current mandate expires on 31 December 2019.

### Key Recent Developments

West Africa and the Sahel have seen a rise in violent intercommunal conflict between herders and farmers, a trend Chambas has flagged during his biannual briefings to the Council, calling it “increasingly a major security threat in the region”.

A UNOWAS study from August 2018 entitled “Pastoralism and Security in West Africa and the Sahel” says the region is experiencing “a surge” in conflicts between herders and farmers, which have claimed thousands of lives in recent years. The movement of herders and their livestock—known as transhumance—has increasingly encroached on farming communities. According to the UNOWAS study, the conflicts are primarily driven by competition for land, water and forage, but there are also political and socio-economic factors involved. Demographic and climatic pressures, arms proliferation, and the presence of violent extremist groups are among the causes and drivers of this violence, the nature of which varies across the region. Mali and Nigeria have been the most severely affected countries in the region, according to the study.

In Mali, intercommunal conflict has been exacerbated by terrorist groups drawing many of their recruits from the ethnic Fulani (or Peuhl, as they are known in Mali), the largest pastoralist group spread across West Africa and the Sahel. Violence by terrorist groups has led to retaliatory attacks against Fulani communities, in turn helping to attract more Fulani recruits to terrorist groups and causing intercommunal conflict to spiral. The situation in central Mali has deteriorated in recent years, with one of the deadliest examples of intercommunal violence occurring on 23 March when at least 160 Fulani civilians were killed in the village of Ogossagou by armed elements of the Dogon ethnic group. In another incident, at least 95 people were killed in a Fulani raid on a Dogon village on 9 June. Similar intercommunal violence fuelled by terrorist groups appears to have spread to neighbouring Burkina Faso, as extremist groups have escalated attacks across much of

the country this year.

Nigeria has experienced the greatest herder-farmer violence. While there have long been such clashes, they have intensified as herders migrate further south, including into Nigeria's more humid zones. The UNOWAS study points out that fatalities from farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria have totalled more than those in the rest of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries combined. An International Crisis Group report last year said that casualties from inter-communal violence between herders and farmers, centred around Nigeria's Middle Belt, killed over 1,300 people from January to June 2018—roughly six times the number of civilians killed by Boko Haram over the same period—and displaced more than 300,000 people.

The Lomé Declaration from the 30 July 2018 joint heads of state summit between ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) on terrorism and violent extremism expressed deep concern at the escalating number and extent of violent conflicts between herders and farmers, a phenomenon that has also been prevalent in Central African states. The two regional blocs also committed to holding regular meetings among ministers for agriculture, livestock and security to identify measures for the prevention and peaceful management of herder-farmer conflicts.

A Security Council presidential statement in August 2018 on West Africa and the Sahel and UNOWAS marked the first time that the Council addressed the herder-farmer conflicts in the region. The Council statement expressed “concern for increased tensions between pastoralists and farmers in the region, driven by competition for natural resources, rapid population growth, weak governance, pressures related to climate and ecological factors, and the circulation of small arms and light weapons”. It encouraged ECOWAS and its member states to address these challenges holistically, with UNOWAS support. The Council's latest presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel on 7 August welcomed the recent UNOWAS study on the issue and again encouraged UNOWAS to support ECOWAS in addressing this problem.

Regarding UNOWAS' mandate renewal, on 15 November the Secretary-General

submitted the report of an independent strategic review of the special political mission, along with his own observations and recommendations. The review, conducted from 10 September to 17 October, was led by the former head of the UN Office for Central Africa, Abdoulaye Bathily.

The review found that UNOWAS constitutes a vital platform for conflict prevention and sustaining peace and has carried out its mandate effectively. In particular, the good offices activities of Special Representative Chambas to defuse tensions, often in the context of high-stakes elections and in coordination with ECOWAS and the AU, were found to be the most visible and effective component of UNOWAS' work. The review highlighted the increased expectations that have been placed on the mission, such as to support post-conflict countries after the closure of UN missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone and the possible conclusion of the UN mission in Guinea-Bissau by the end of 2020; a stepped-up role in The Gambia and Burkina Faso; and to address evolving transnational threats, in particular from terrorism but also issues such as herder-farmer conflicts. The demands require increased human and financial resources, according to the report and the Secretary-General's observations.

### Key Issues and Options

Next month's session would seem to be the Council's first stand-alone meeting on intercommunal violence in West Africa and the Sahel. As observed by the UN study, the problem is multidimensional, involving peace and security, peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian issues, thus requiring a cross-pillar approach. What more the Council and the UN can do to support responses to the problem, including in light of UNOWAS' upcoming mandate renewal, is a key issue. The Council may adopt a presidential statement on the subject, which could further identify sources of the problem and best practices in addressing herder-farmer conflicts.

For the UNOWAS mandate renewal, the Council may agree to the recommendations of the strategic review. This could include supporting the Secretary-General's recommendations from his summary of the review:

- Strengthening UNOWAS's mandate to acquire the agility and capacity needed to



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## West Africa and the Sahel

allow the mission to be more proactive in the face of existing and emerging threats, and to scale-up cross-pillar coordination and cooperation for greater coherence in UN interaction with national and sub-regional entities.

- Reconfiguring UNOWAS to promote better collaboration among UN entities in the region for greater collective UN impact, while maintaining a clear division of labour, and to enhance UNOWAS' collaboration with regional and sub-regional bodies, such as ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel).

The Council could support other recommendations from the report, such as establishing a UNOWAS presence in Abuja to enhance cooperation with ECOWAS,

strengthening the UNOWAS liaison office to the G5 Sahel in Nouakchott, enhancing UNOWAS collaboration with governments of the Lake Chad Basin in addressing the Boko Haram crisis, and supporting the Secretary-General's proposal from September to create a clearer division of labour around the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

### Council Dynamics

Côte d'Ivoire has been interested in having the Council consider the issue of herder-farmer violence in more depth, and proposed the meeting which it is organising with the US, the Council's December president.

Consistent with findings of the strategic review, members view UNOWAS as playing a significant conflict-prevention role, and have valued the good offices activities undertaken by Special Representative Chambas in

addressing political crises and electoral tensions. At press time, members were expected to exchange views on the recommendations of the UNOWAS strategic review during an informal interactive dialogue to be held on the report on 27 November with Bathily, a representative of the Secretariat, and possibly Peacebuilding Commission Chair Guillermo Fernández de Soto Valderrama (Colombia). Some members could be hesitant to support recommendations that would require increased financial resources. The West African Council member traditionally serves as penholder on UNOWAS. During 2019, Côte d'Ivoire and Belgium have served as co-penholders on UNOWAS. Starting in January, incoming member Niger is expected to succeed Côte d'Ivoire.

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## Afghanistan

### Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan. Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), is expected to brief on the latest Secretary-General's report on UNAMA, due in December, and the most recent developments. Aisha Khurram, Afghanistan's current Youth Representative to the UN, may also brief. Additionally, the Security Council will have to renew the mandate of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee, set to expire on 17 December.

The mandate of UNAMA expires on 17 September 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

On 2 September, following the ninth round of negotiations with the Taliban, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, announced that the US and the Taliban had reached an

agreement "in principle". In exchange for a timeline for US and NATO troop withdrawal, the talks were aimed at having the Taliban guarantee that they will not allow armed groups on Afghan territory to launch attacks in or outside Afghanistan. An intra-Afghan dialogue and a ceasefire were also goals of the talks. In seeking the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban have insisted on talking directly with the US government, rather than with the Afghan government, whose legitimacy they do not recognise. On 7 September, US President Trump suddenly announced that he had cancelled the talks, as well as invitations to Camp David for Taliban leaders and Afghan president Ashraf Ghani.

Even though the talks have not officially resumed at press time, Khalilzad continues his efforts, including confidence-building measures between the Afghan government and the Taliban. On 18 November, two hostages from America and Australia were released by the Taliban in exchange for three senior Taliban figures including Anas

Haqqani, son of the deceased former leader of the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network. On 21 November, ten Afghan security force members that had been detained by the Taliban were released.

On 24 November, a UN vehicle was hit by a grenade, killing an international UNAMA staff member and injuring five civilians, including two Afghan staff members.

On 17 September, following difficult negotiations, Council members adopted resolution 2489, renewing UNAMA's mandate until 17 September 2020. China insisted on maintaining a reference to its "Belt and Road Initiative" (language agreed to in preceding UNAMA resolutions) in the context of welcoming regional economic cooperation, which was not acceptable to the US. An alternative draft resolution put forward by China and Russia, a few days before the adoption, still included this reference. A compromise draft—as eventually adopted—referred to UNAMA's role to "support regional cooperation, [...] as well as assisting Afghanistan in utilizing its role at the

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2489](#) (17 September 2019) renewed the mandate of UNAMA until 17 September 2020. [Secretary-General's Report S/2019/703](#) (3 September 2019) was the latest report on Afghanistan. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8620](#) (17 September 2019) was the adoption of resolution 2489, extending UNAMA's mandate until 17 September 2020. [S/PV.8613](#) (10 September 2019) was the latest quarterly meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. [Security Council Press Statements SC/13992](#) (21 October 2019) condemned in the strongest terms a terrorist attack on 18 October in the Haska Mena district in Nangarhar Province. The attack resulted in the death of at least 60 people and almost 60 injured. [SC/13969](#) (2 October 2019) was on the 28 September presidential elections. [SC/13957](#) (19 September 2019) condemned in the strongest terms the "continuing high number of attacks" in Afghanistan.

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# Afghanistan

heart of Asia to promote regional cooperation and connectivity [...].”

Presidential elections took place on 28 September, with initial results still outstanding at press time. According to preliminary estimates, a quarter of registered voters went to the polls, the lowest turnout in any election in the country. On election day, according to UNAMA’s report on election-related violence, there were no mass-casualty incidents. There were, however, 100 documented election-related incidents resulting in 277 civilian casualties (28 civilians dead and 249 injured, with children accounting for over a third of the overall casualties). UNAMA reports that around 95 per cent of those incidents can be attributed to the Taliban. A 17 September suicide attack at an election rally in Parwan claimed thirty civilian lives and caused 51 injuries. On 19 September, a truck bomb attack in Zabul killed 25 civilians, injured 93 and caused extensive damage to a nearby hospital. The Taliban claimed responsibility for both attacks.

In a 26 September press release, UNAMA refers to “multiple credible reports” indicating that “high numbers of civilians were killed and injured when the United States military carried out airstrikes on 19 September in Nangarhar and on 22 September in Helmand”. The airstrikes in Helmand were carried out in support of a ground operation by US and Afghan forces, according to UNAMA.

UNAMA’s 17 October quarterly report on protection of civilians in armed conflict documents the highest number of civilian casualties within a single quarter since UNAMA started systematically documenting civilian casualties in 2009. UNAMA reports 4,313 civilian casualties, including 174 deaths and 3,139 injured, between 1 July and 30 September, noting that this coincided with the progression of US-Taliban talks. UNAMA attributes the increase in casualties to a rise in attacks involving improvised explosive

devices (IEDs), primarily conducted by the Taliban.

At press time, the UN’s 2019 humanitarian response plan for Afghanistan of \$611.8 million was funded at 74.2 percent, with \$147.6 million outstanding.

## ICC-Related Developments

On 20 November 2017, ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda requested authorisation from the Court’s judges to initiate an investigation into alleged international crimes in the context of the ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan since 2003. These included war crimes (committed by the Taliban and their affiliated Haqqani Network, Afghan security forces, the US armed forces, and the US Central Intelligence Agency) and crimes against humanity (committed by the Taliban and their affiliated Haqqani Network).

On 12 April, the judges of Pre-Trial Chamber II unanimously rejected the prosecutor’s request. Although the request met the requirements for jurisdiction and admissibility, they said the context of the situation in Afghanistan renders the “prospects for a successful investigation and prosecution extremely limited”. The judges concluded that an investigation “would not serve the interests of justice”, a criterion set out in the Rome Statute of the ICC. On 7 June, the Prosecutor requested to submit an appeal against the decision: this was granted by Pre-Trial Chamber II on 17 September, and oral arguments are scheduled for 4-6 December.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 9 October, UNAMA and OHCHR released a joint special report examining the impact on civilians of United States airstrikes on alleged drug-processing facilities on 5 May in Afghanistan. The report states that at 15 September, UNAMA had verified 39 civilian casualties as a result of the operation, with reliable and credible information to substantiate at least a further 37 additional civilian casualties, including women and children. The report maintains that drug facilities and associated workers may not lawfully be made the target of attack based on their possible economic or financial contribution to the war effort of a party to a conflict, and sets out five recommendations to the US, including that it conduct an independent investigation to examine the impact on civilians of the 5 May operation.

## Key Issues and Options

The immediate issue for the Council is the renewal of the mandate of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee.

One continuing set of issues facing the Council is the continued pursuit of different negotiating tracks geared towards peace in Afghanistan. In particular, if the talks between the US and the Taliban might resume, the Council will need to decide if and how it may endorse eventual outcomes.

Council members will further watch how the results of the presidential elections will affect the political situation in the country and consider reacting with a presidential or a press statement.

The last quarterly Council meeting on Afghanistan, held on 10 September, took the form of a debate, giving states outside the Council with interests in the country, including states of the region, the opportunity to speak. Considering ongoing developments in the situation, Council members may instead be interested in having a briefing followed by consultations, to allow for a more interactive and frank discussion with Yamamoto, as they did in March.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are generally united in their support for UNAMA and are committed to a peace process. They remain concerned about the overall security, political, and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Several members of the Council are engaged in different talks aimed at a peace agreement; these talks do not always include the Afghan government. Most members routinely emphasise that a peace process in Afghanistan has to be Afghan-led.

Germany and Indonesia are the co-penholders on Afghanistan, and Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) chairs the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. The US is the penholder on the sanctions file.

# South Sudan

## Expected Council Action

In December, the Council will receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan. Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland), chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, is also expected to brief on the Committee's work. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing.

The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) expires on 15 March 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

The overall level of political violence remains at lower levels than prior to the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on 12 September 2018. However, slow implementation of the R-ARCSS has contributed to uncertainty around the peace process. Ethnic and intercommunal violence continues, as do sporadic clashes between government and opposition forces in some parts of the country. The human rights, humanitarian, food security and economic conditions in the country remain dire, with an enormous impact on civilians.

On 20 October, the Council conducted a one-day mission to Juba, South Sudan, which was co-led by the US (as penholder on South Sudan) and South Africa (as Council president for the month). The Council met with President Salva Kiir and other signatory parties and stakeholders of the R-ARCSS, including Riek Machar, who apparently told the Council that he would not join a transitional government until security forces had been unified, and called for a further extension of the pre-transitional period. The Council also received a briefing from UNMISS and a briefing on the humanitarian situation, and met with civil society organisations, including women's groups. (See our *What's In Blue* story of 21 October 2019.)

Ahead of its visiting mission, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on 8 October on the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Among other things, it calls on the parties to expedite the process of implementing key outstanding tasks; expresses concern at the dire humanitarian, human rights, and economic situation; and stresses that "actions

which threaten the peace, security, or stability of South Sudan may be subject to sanctions" under the relevant resolutions. (See our *What's In Blue* story of 7 October 2019.)

On 6 November, the Council was briefed on South Sudan in consultations by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Representative for South Sudan and head of UNMISS David Shearer. Council members agreed on press elements that were then read out following the consultations. Members expressed concern that during the 20 October visit to South Sudan the Council had not observed substantive progress on key elements of the R-ARCSS, and called for full implementation, clear benchmarks, the cessation of hostilities, and ceasefire agreements.

On 7 November, President Kiir and opposition leader Machar met in Entebbe, Uganda, and agreed to extend the pre-transitional period by a further 100 days, effective from 12 November, to enable critical outstanding pre-transitional tasks specified under the R-ARCSS to be completed. These include the cantonment and training of a unified army and agreement on the number and boundaries of states. According to the terms of the R-ARCSS, 12 May was to mark the end of the eight-month pre-transitional period and the start of the 36-month transitional period, with elections to be held 60 days before the end of the transitional period. In early May, the parties extended the deadline for the end of the pre-transitional period by six months, until 12 November.

On 10 November, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) adopted a communiqué that welcomed the 100-day extension; called on the IGAD Heads of State and Government to continue facilitating face-to-face meetings of the leadership of the parties; and emphasised the need to work on a roadmap and implementation plan to ensure the timely completion of pending pre-transitional tasks, among other things. It also directed the IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan, Ismail Wais, to carry out several tasks, including to facilitate a meeting of the parties to the R-ARCSS to resolve the issue of the number of states and their boundaries,

organise a leadership retreat for the leaders of the parties to the R-ARCSS for trust and confidence building as soon as possible, and closely monitor the progress of implementation of the critical pending tasks within the 100-day period. On 12 November, Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed IGAD's communiqué and reaffirmed the "critical importance" of the role of IGAD and the AU in the political process, and the continued readiness of the UN to support their efforts. On 22 November, Council members adopted a press statement which took note of the 100-day extension.

The last formal Council briefing by Shearer, on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, was on 18 September. (See our *What's In Blue* story of 17 September 2019.)

## Sanctions-Related Developments

On 18 November, the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee met with regard to the interim report of the Panel of Experts, transmitted on 20 November. Ambassador Joanna Wronecka of Poland visited South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Sudan from 6 to 15 October as chair of the Committee.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 16 September, during its 42nd session, the Human Rights Council received an oral update from the chair of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, Yasmin Sooka, followed by an interactive dialogue. Sooka referred to the commission's seventh field mission to South Sudan and the region from 19 to 24 August. She highlighted that "South Sudan's political elites are...oblivious to the intense suffering of millions of their own people". On 8 November, the commission released a statement following the agreement to extend the deadline for the formation of the national unity government by 100 days urging all parties "to work with renewed urgency to resolve the outstanding issues" adding that the "South Sudanese are desperate for peace so they can begin the task of rebuilding their lives and develop the potential of their country following years of conflict".

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue is how the Council can support the parties in South Sudan, as well as IGAD and other regional actors, in the implementation of the R-ARCSS given the continued delays in completing key tasks required and

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2459](#) (15 March 2019) extended the mandate of UNMISS. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/11](#) (8 October 2019) was a presidential statement focusing on the implementation of the R-ARCSS of 12 September 2018. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2019/741](#) (12 September 2019) was the report on "future planning for the protection of civilians sites" in South Sudan, as requested in resolution 2459. [S/2019/722](#) (10 September 2019) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8621](#) (18 September 2019) was a meeting on South Sudan. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14033](#) (22 November 2019) was on the 100-day extension. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2019/897](#) (20 November 2019) was the interim report of the Panel of Experts.

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## South Sudan

in light of the second extension to the deadline for the end of the pre-transitional period. An option would be to request IGAD Special Envoy Wais to regularly brief the Council on steps being taken by IGAD and how best the Council can support these. Council members could also consider imposing further targeted sanctions against those who undermine the process, as referred to in the presidential statement adopted on 8 October and the 22 November press statement.

### Council Dynamics

Council members continue to follow the situation in South Sudan closely and support the roles played by IGAD and the region working towards a political resolution of the conflict. Council members recognise some progress since the signing of the R-ARCSS, in particular, the decrease in political violence. Following the Council's mission to South Sudan, many Council members are particularly concerned over the commitment of the parties

to fully implement the R-ARCSS and slow progress in implementing key tasks during the pre-transitional period. Members also remain concerned about the humanitarian situation and persistence of human rights violations and abuses.

There were divisions among Council members during negotiations for the presidential statement adopted on 8 October. Several members pushed for the inclusion of more positive language to what was initially proposed by the US. How to characterise the pace of the implementation of the R-ARCSS was particularly contentious in this regard. The initial draft circulated by the US expressed concern over the slow implementation of critical components of the R-ARCSS, "causing uncertainty around the peace process". This was removed at the request of China, supported by some other members. There was also disagreement around language on women and human rights. The statement urges parties to continue taking

steps to "promote the meaningful participation of women". Russia broke silence seeking the removal of stronger language in the initial draft that had called on the parties "to ensure the full participation of women", a request accommodated by the penholder. On human rights, the statement retained language from the initial draft emphasising the need to ensure accountability and end impunity for violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. However, reference to the visit of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan to the country, and ongoing violations and abuses that have been reported since the R-ARCSS was signed, were removed at the request of China.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan. Poland chairs the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee until the end of the year, after which incoming Council member Viet Nam is expected to chair the Committee.

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## Briefing by the Outgoing Chairs of the Security Council Subsidiary Bodies

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### Expected Council Action

It has become a tradition that every December the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies have provided a briefing on their experience. Representatives of countries completing their two-year terms on the Council at the end of 2019, and their respective chairmanships, are:

- Ambassador Kacou Houadja Léon Adom (Côte d'Ivoire)—the 2127 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee and the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations.
- Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea)—the 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee and the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee.
- Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi (Kuwait)—the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee and the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

- Deputy Permanent Representative Luis Ugarelli (Peru)—the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee; the 1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism; the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals; and the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee.
- Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland)—the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee; the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee; and the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

### Background

Established during the Colombian presidency of the Council in December 2002, the practice of briefings by the outgoing chairs of the subsidiary bodies is considered an important element in efforts to provide greater transparency to the work of the sanctions committees and working groups. It is also an opportunity for departing chairs to share lessons learned

from the experience with their successors. Since not all subsidiary bodies produce an annual report, this annual briefing has also served over the years as a means of creating a publicly-accessible institutional memory of a body's activities.

### Key Recent Developments

At this briefing, each chair will be able to review developments within the relevant committee or working group during their two-year term, assess their experience, suggest recommendations for improvements, and provide advice to their respective successors.

Ambassador Kacou Houadja Léon Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) will speak on the developments in the 2127 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee. It is likely he will discuss the process that culminated in the Council's amending the arms embargo through the 12 September adoption of resolution 2488. Additionally, he chaired the

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SUBSIDIARY BODIES** Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8428 (17 December 2018) were the previous briefings by the chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. **Notes by the President of the Security Council S/2017/507** (30 August 2017) was the Note of the Security Council containing the compendium of its working methods, including changes to the appointment of chairs of subsidiary bodies. **S/2016/619** (15 July 2016) was a presidential note concerning transitional arrangements for newly elected Council members. **Security Council Letter S/2018/1024** (13 November 2018) was a letter to the president of the Council from the elected ten and incoming five members.

## Briefing by the Outgoing Chairs of the Security Council Subsidiary Bodies

Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations. Much of the Working Group's focus has been on improving triangular cooperation among the Council, the Secretariat, and troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs). On 23 August, the Working Group held a meeting on the implementation of the commitments ahead of the one-year anniversary of the September 2018 Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations.

Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) will speak on the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee. He is likely to highlight the two visits to Guinea-Bissau he made in June 2018 and October 2019. The first visit was to assess the political situation and the Security Council travel ban against ten individuals for their involvement in the April 2012 coup. The second visit focused on encouraging free and fair elections. With both visits, the chair was able to meet with high-level officials, including the president. Given his desire when he took the chairmanship to begin lifting sanctions on Guinea-Bissau, he may bring this up as something for the next chair to consider in 2020, especially if this month's elections in Guinea-Bissau go smoothly. His other chairmanship is of the 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee, which is dormant.

Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) is expected to spend the bulk of his time describing the experience of chairing the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG). This has included being the co-coordinator of the process of appointment of chairs of subsidiary bodies in 2018 and 2019, an experience he may wish to reflect upon. He is also likely to describe the experience of negotiating several presidential notes on working methods during his tenure as IWG chair. Regarding the chairing of the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee, he is likely to discuss his visit to the region in 2019 as well as the ongoing efforts to investigate the 2017 deaths of two members of the 1533 Sanctions Committee's group of experts.

Deputy Permanent Representative Ugarelli (Peru) will chair the committees previously chaired by former Peruvian Ambassador

Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (who in October was named his country's foreign minister). He is likely to highlight the adoption of two important counter-terrorism resolutions in 2019 when discussing the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee: resolution 2462, that reiterated commitments on criminalising terrorism and the financing of terrorism, and resolution 2482 on the linkages between international terrorism and transnational organised crime. Regarding the chairmanship of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, its first-ever trip to the region, visiting Amman, Riyadh, Muscat and Tehran from 30 March to 5 April, is likely to be part of the briefing. The Informal Working Group on International Tribunals, under Peru's chairmanship, routinely met with members of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals ahead of their semi-annual briefings to the Council. The 1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, which Peru also chaired, has remained dormant.

Finally, Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland) will brief on her chairmanship of three committees. First, she is likely to highlight her reinvigoration of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee, which in 2019 held its first meeting since 2005. According to its annual report, 20 entities were delisted in 2018 via written procedure and an additional 73 have been delisted in 2019 so far. For her chairmanship of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee and the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, Wronecka may highlight the various collaborative exchanges held this year. At her initiative, both these committees met with other subsidiary bodies to discuss issues of common concern. For example, on 21 June 2019, the Committee held joint informal consultations with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 concerning Libya and the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee to discuss the presence of Darfuri armed groups in Libya and South Sudan. Her chairmanship is also notable for her trips in the region. In 2019 alone, Wronecka visited South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Sudan, including Khartoum and Darfur.

New selection procedures of subsidiary body chairmanships for elected members have been in place since 2016. This year the process was chaired by China and Kuwait.

The list passed silence on 11 October. The list, still considered provisional, will become formal in January and will be published in document S/2020/2.

- Estonia—the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee and the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee;
- Niger—the 1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism; the 2127 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee; the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee;
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines—the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions and the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee;
- Tunisia—the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee; the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations; the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee;
- Viet Nam—the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee; the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals; the 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee.

### Council Dynamics

The past three years have seen significant change in the process of appointing chairs of the Council subsidiary bodies. In 2016, when for the first time the elections to the Security Council were held in June, the Council agreed on an earlier and more consultative method of appointing the chairs. After a relatively smooth process in 2016 and 2017, last year there were disagreements on how the process should proceed. On 13 November 2018, a joint letter addressed to the president of the Security Council submitted by the ten elected members and the five incoming delegations proposed, among other things, making better use within the Council of its members' expertise by designating the chairs of the sanctions committees as co-penholders on the relevant files. The final chairmanships list was put under silence on 20 November 2018, missing the intended 1 October deadline by over a month and a half.

In 2019, the process returned to being fairly harmonious. The incoming five members discussed their "wish lists" for chairmanships amongst themselves before submitting a list as a group to China and Kuwait.

# Democratic Republic of the Congo

## Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will need to adopt a resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) before it expires on 20 December.

The 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) sanctions regime expires on 1 July 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

On 25 October, Council members received the independent strategic review as requested by resolution 2463 of 29 March. The resolution asked for an assessment of the continued challenges in the DRC and for the reviewers to articulate “a phased, progressive and comprehensive exit strategy”. The review team, led by Senior Adviser at the International Peace Institute (IPI) Youssef Mahmoud, undertook two visits to the DRC: one from 24 June to 18 July and another in September. Due to the fact that the new DRC government was only established on 26 August, seven months after the inauguration of President Félix Tshisekedi and eight months after the elections, the team was unable to consult with its members on its two field visits. In an 8 November letter to the President of the Security Council, the DRC Permanent Representative informed the Council that the newly formed government had just established a committee to consider the independent strategic review of MONUSCO and begun conducting internal consultations on MONUSCO’s future mandate. The letter said that following the consultations, the government would transmit to the Council a memorandum stating its position.

The review analyses the political challenges and opportunities in the DRC and evaluates MONUSCO’s current mandate. It outlines how to have a responsible and phased drawdown and how MONUSCO should be adjusted accordingly. The review also includes best/worst case scenarios and options for several types of future MONUSCO configurations. The strategic review recommends that the timeline for a MONUSCO exit be an absolute minimum of three years, with its departure at the end of 2022. However, the review includes a significant caveat,

namely “a concern that the three-year transition period may be too short to even begin addressing the key structural drivers of conflict in the DRC”, and lists several “red lines” that, if crossed, should pause any exit process. Perhaps most controversially for some members, the strategic review assesses that the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) “has not measured up to the expectations of its current mandate” and therefore recommends renewing its mandate for no more than one additional year. The review warns that “a budget-driven, precipitated exit would be a disastrous choice” and advocates an exit strategy that is responsive to conditions on the ground.

In his letter transmitting the review report, Secretary-General António Guterres said that he may send additional comments and recommendations ahead of the mandate renewal. It seems that there has been an effort to bring forward the submission of the periodic report on MONUSCO, which was due at the end of December, to the end of November. His comments may come attached to that.

Council members discussed the strategic review with Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix on 13 November in closed consultations. This was the first opportunity for the UN Secretariat formally to express their views on the upcoming mandate renewal discussions and the strategic review. In his remarks, Lacroix welcomed the work done by the review team but did not explicitly support its findings. He indicated support for a slightly reduced troop ceiling while at the same time advocating for a temporary increase in police components, the better to respond to increased criminality in some areas. Lacroix strongly differed with the review’s faulting of the FIB, calling the Brigade critical and advocating for it to remain in the DRC. He urged Council members to be guided by conditions on the ground when determining the pace of MONUSCO’s drawdown. After the meeting, the UK, as president of the Council for November, read out elements to the press, noting that members of the Council had been briefed by Lacroix on both MONUSCO and the independent strategic review. The elements say that Council members shared the analysis that MONUSCO should maintain

its focus on the protection of civilians and took note of the review’s recommendations. The elements also welcome the DRC’s creation of a national committee for the strategic review of MONUSCO.

Eastern DRC remains destabilised. On 1 November, government forces launched a new offensive in Beni and surrounding areas targeting the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), who have been responsible for high numbers of deaths in recent years. On 16 November, the ADF reportedly responded to the offensive by killing at least 15 civilians in and around the village of Mbau in eastern DRC. Similar such raids have continued. The situation escalated and beginning on 20 November there were violent demonstrations against MONUSCO by the local population, which feels unprotected. On 25 November protesters damaged the perimeter wall and entered the MONUSCO compound in Boikene. As a result, the Secretariat requested a meeting under “any other business” of Council members on 26 November. By 18 November, the Ebola outbreak had surpassed 3,200 confirmed cases and 2,100 deaths in the DRC since August 2018, according to the World Health Organization.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

[Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi \(Kuwait\) chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee and is likely to preside over its final meeting of the year on 4 December, when the Committee will discuss the Group of Experts’ mid-term report. The report’s deadline is 30 December, but it seems likely that it will be submitted before the end of November.](#)

## Key Issues and Options

Now that the independent strategic review has been published, the Council will want to consider it along with ongoing political and security developments when deciding the future of MONUSCO. Council members will need to decide how closely to follow the recommendations of the strategic review. At press time, no public meeting was scheduled ahead of the mandate renewal, but the Council could decide to hold a briefing or consultations in the period leading up to the mandate renewal.

The Council is especially eager to hear

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2478](#) (26 June 2019) renewed the 1533 sanctions regime until 1 July 2020. [S/RES/2463](#) (29 March 2019) renewed the mandate of MONUSCO until 20 December and called for a strategic review. [Security Council Letters S/2019/870](#) (12 November 2019) informed the Council that the DRC government established a national committee to discuss the strategic review of MONUSCO. [S/2019/842](#) (24 October 2019) was a letter transmitting the independent strategic review of MONUSCO. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13985](#) (14 October 2019) was the latest press statement from Council members on the DRC.

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## Democratic Republic of the Congo

from the DRC government how they foresee MONUSCO's future. France has proposed holding an informal meeting at its mission once the DRC transmits the memorandum stating its position. The Council could also consider holding an informal interactive dialogue to bring together representatives from the DRC, the strategic review team, and the Secretariat to exchange views in private.

### Council Dynamics

While the Council had been united in their positive view of Tshisekedi's efforts in the DRC since his election, as negotiations begin on the mandate to renew MONUSCO, there are several flashpoints on which Council members are likely to diverge. Some members

have been adamant about their wish to implement an exit strategy for MONUSCO once the electoral cycle was complete. Others want to see any change guided by the situation on the ground and are urging a more cautious approach. There is likely to be extensive discussion on whether to have a strict timeline for drawdown – for example, the end of 2022 as mentioned in the independent strategic review—or allow the drawdown to be guided more by, in the classic expression, “end states rather than end dates”.

South Africa, in particular, is worried that a drawdown that moves too quickly will undermine progress that has been achieved. It continues to support a role for the FIB, which could be a roadblock in negotiations. Some

Council members are less enthusiastic about the FIB's effectiveness and would prefer to see MONUSCO restructured without it.

All members agree that having ownership from the DRC government itself is crucial and they are anxious to hear what the government has to say. There is also some agreement from members on the need to standardise and streamline the mandate of MONUSCO, currently one of the largest UN missions.

The penholder on the DRC is France. Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee; on 1 January 2020, he is likely to be succeeded by Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger).

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## Iran

### Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is scheduled to receive the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. The Council also expects reports from the Joint Commission, established by the parties to the JCPOA to oversee its implementation, and from the Council's 2231 facilitator, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium). Briefings are expected from Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Pecsteen, and a representative of the EU in its capacity as coordinator of the Joint Commission.

### Key Recent Developments

Tensions between the US and Iran have been on a steady rise since the US announced its withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018. The US administration introduced a policy of maximum pressure to counter what it regards as Iran's destabilising behaviour in the region, and has imposed unilateral sanctions targeting Iran's economic sectors and its leadership. Iran has responded by gradually transgressing its obligations under the

JCPOA and has conditioned its return to full compliance on sanctions relief from the agreement's remaining parties. Recent security incidents in the Persian Gulf have added another layer of complexity and presented a threat to regional stability.

On 18 November, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that Iran had exceeded its stockpile limits of heavy water which under the JCPOA should be kept below 130 metric tons. Earlier in November, Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, announced that Iran would start injecting uranium gas into centrifuges at its Fordow nuclear facility and resume production of enriched uranium at the site. Under the terms of the JCPOA, Iran is not permitted to undertake any enrichment activities at Fordow until 2030. In July, Iran first breached its enriched uranium stockpile limit of 300 kilograms and then started enriching uranium beyond the JCPOA-set limit of 3.67 percent. Rouhani has emphasised that Iran could reverse its actions if the remaining parties to the agreement uphold their commitments and provide it with sanctions relief.

Regional tensions escalated after the 14 September attacks on the Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, causing

heavy damage. The Houthis claimed that they had launched the attack using ten drones. The scale, precision and range of the strikes, about 500 miles from Yemeni territory, raised doubts about this claim. The US charged that Iran had been responsible and that the operation had not originated from Yemen. During the high-level week at the UN General Assembly, the leaders of France, Germany and the UK issued a joint statement declaring Iran responsible for the attacks. Emphasising the need for diplomatic engagement and a de-escalation of tensions, these countries reiterated their commitment to preserving the JCPOA. They also urged Iran to return to full compliance and reverse steps taken to undermine the agreement.

The Council held its last regular meeting on the implementation of resolution 2231 on 26 June. Earlier in June, Council members met first under “any other business” on 13 June to discuss the security incidents in the Gulf of Oman, including the attacks on commercial ships. Then on 23 June, the Council held consultations after Iran's downing of a US reconnaissance drone. Iran had said that the drone violated its airspace, while the US claimed that it was shot down over international waters. Following the consultations,

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAN** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2231](#) (20 July 2015) endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2019/514](#) (21 June 2019) was the Secretary-General's report on implementation of resolution 2231. [Security Council Letter S/2019/488](#) (18 June 2019) was the report of the Joint Commission on the status of the Procurement Working Group's decisions and on any implementation issues. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8564](#) (26 June 2019) was the semiannual briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13762](#) (2 April 2019) reaffirmed the commitment to advancing the goals of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. [Other S/2019/738](#) (12 September 2019) was the IAEA report on verification and monitoring in Iran in light of resolution 2231.

# Iran

Council members issued press elements urging the concerned parties to show restraint and end tensions but did not assign responsibility for the attacks. The US has consistently blamed Iran for the June attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf, an accusation Iran has denied.

## Key Issues and Options

The Council is facing a growing number of issues related to Iran and non-proliferation. At the moment, the primary concern for the Council is to ensure full implementation of resolution 2231 by the parties to the JCPOA and the wider UN membership.

Over the past months, Iran has breached several of its JCPOA commitments. Should the remaining parties to the agreement fail to resolve Iran's noncompliance issues, an option would be to formally notify the Council, which would initiate the so-called "snap-back mechanism" that would effectively reinstate the sanctions that were in place before the adoption of resolution 2231.

The Council will need to assess the implications of the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and the impact of the unilateral US sanctions measures on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the agreement. While Council members usually address some of these issues during the semi-annual briefings on implementation of resolution 2231, an option for the Council would be to organise a private meeting in consultations to further consider this issue. Such a meeting could provide an opportunity for a more frank exchange among Council members.

The standoff between the US and Iran over the JCPOA has also affected the regional security situation and heightened military tensions in the Persian Gulf. Given the overall military build-up in the region and the potential for open confrontation, the Council will follow this situation closely. Should tensions escalate further, the Council could consider making a more formal pronouncement urging restraint on all sides.

## Council Dynamics

Before the current US administration took office, the Council was united in its support for the JCPOA and had endorsed the agreement unanimously when it adopted resolution 2231. The May 2018 decision by the US to formally withdraw from the agreement has left the Council divided on this issue. While

it criticised the unilateral US actions, Iran remained in compliance with JCPOA provisions for over a year after the US withdrawal. The US has claimed that Iran's destabilising behaviour in the region runs contrary to the spirit of the agreement, and has maintained a maximum pressure campaign on Iran, imposing a series of unilateral sanctions. Most other Council members—among them China, France, Germany, the UK and Russia, which are parties to the agreement—maintain their position that the JCPOA remains valid, reiterate the importance of preserving it, and say that they will continue to adhere to its provisions.

These members have, however, expressed concern over Iran's latest violations of the agreement and have called on Iran to return to full compliance. Given its continued breaches of the JCPOA, Iran is at risk of losing support from the other parties to the agreement and the wider Council membership.

In addition to non-proliferation issues, the Council has also been drawn into consideration of the regional security situation. The attacks on the Saudi oil facilities and oil tankers in the Persian Gulf present a risk for potential military confrontation between the US and its allies, and Iran. The Council has been united in calling for de-escalation and restraint by all parties. While some Council members were initially cautious, the US has been adamant in assigning Iran direct responsibility for the Saudi oil facility attack, and on September 23 France, Germany and the UK joined the US in this position.

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Design Point Five, NY

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